Antiquities of Upper Tibet

An Inventory of Pre-Buddhist Archaeological Sites on the High Plateau

(Findings of the Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition, 2000)

by
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To all those who have taught me

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Table of Contents

PHOTOGRAPHS

XI-e : Gong ra

XI-f : sGog ra

XI-g : Brag gdong

XI-h : Kham pa Rwa co

XI-i : Brag lung Nub ma

XI-j : Chu mKhar Gyam sGrub phug

XI-k : Gri'u Chu thang

MAPS

Introduction

Introduction

SECTION I: OVERVIEW

The findings presented in this monograph are derived from my Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition, conducted in the sTod and Byang thang regions of the Tibetan plateau in the summer of 2000. On the Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition I covered approximately 7000 kilometers in motor vehicles and another 800 kilometers on foot. The objective of this expedition, which spent three months in the field, was to collect information on the pre-Buddhist cultural and archaeological heritage of the region. This data was of a three-fold interdisciplinary nature: archaeological, ethnographic and textual. The focus of the present monograph is the exposition of the findings of the archaeological component of the expedition.[1] The work provided herein builds on the author's previous research to chronicle the pre-Buddhist heritage of Upper Tibet,[2] specifically as pertains to monuments and rock art.

The Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition corroborates the findings of the author's earlier expeditions, which singularly demonstrate that Upper Tibet is extremely rich in archaeological evidence (in the form of rock art and elevations) exhibiting a pre-Buddhist chronological and cultural identity. By inventorying and analyzing physical evidence from 250 sites, I have been able to identify prime areas of ancient settlement and the major patterns of geographic distribution. This is a first step towards developing a model of settlement archaeology in the region. I have also devised a typological nomenclature to describe the diverse body of constructional and design forms that can be attributed

1. Other materials compiled on the Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition will appear in subsequent works.
2. See bibliography. In this work for the sake of brevity, and due to the manifold archaeological interconnections, I shall refer to the sTod and Byang thang regions collectively as Upper Tibet. For a description of the territorial delimitation of this more than 600,000 square kilometer expanse see Bellezza 2001, pp. 2, 3.

as pre-Buddhist. To establish this pre-Buddhist identity I have relied on historical, legendary, locational, morphological and comparative evidence.[3]

The question that first has to be addressed is: what precisely does the term pre-Buddhist define? In previous works, I have used the term pre-Buddhist in a highly inclusive manner to embrace a very wide chronological spectrum. Without chronometric and other types of archaeometric data derived from excavation, I have, with what I believe to be good reason, avoided attributing dates to archaeological evidence in all but the broadest terms possible. In a strict chronological sense the end of the pre-Buddhist period in Upper Tibet should be marked by the conquest of Zhang zhung in the mid 7th century, but pre-Buddhist cultural forms proved to be much more persistent. In the subsequent Imperial period (early 7th to mid-9th century) pre-Buddhist customs and traditions continued to play a fairly dominant role in Tibet, as documents and inscriptions of the time clearly indicate.[4] This period also probably saw the development of fortresses and habitations based on architectural traditions already existing in Upper Tibet. There is no question that Imperial period Tibetan armies were active in Upper Tibet,[5] which in some form or another must be documented in the archaeological record. The conquest of the Tarim basin oases and the construction of permanent facilities would not have been logistically feasible without an effective line of command and control, and the relatively large movement of troops through the region.[6]

It was not until around 1000 CE that Tibet was well on the path of being thoroughly recast as a Buddhist country. The gradual transformation from the culture of Zhang zhung to that of Buddhism in western parts of the plateau is associated with the ethnical process of Tibetanization. A graphic example of this process of assimilation is found at Ta po monastery in sPi ti, where inscriptions of the *bstan pa phyi dar*, circa 1000 CE, contain non-Tibetan clan and place names, which can be attributed to the survival of Zhang zhung cultural forms (Klimberg-Salter 1997: 32, 34). Similarly, inscriptions found near the contemporaneous A lci monastery exhibit orthographic and onomastic archaisms (Denwood 1980: 123-154, 161).[7] In the popular culture of the *'brog pa* (stock-breeders)[8] and *zhing pa* (farmers) of Upper Tibet, pre-Buddhist legacies continued to thrive after the *bstan pa phyi dar*, as they still do today to some extent.[9] Most notable examples of contemporary practices and beliefs that have been long observed and are derived from pre-Buddhist cultural traditions include the cult of local deities, certain clan genealogies, techniques of divination such as scapulimancy, aspects of demonology, spirit-mediumship, fortune-bestowing rites, ransom rites, hunting rituals, as well as others.

Given the persistence of pre-Buddhist cultural forms in religious and social spheres in Upper Tibet, and the eminently pragmatic nature of its hardy residents, smaller physical demonstrations of early culture continued to manifest themselves in the Buddhist dominated cultural environment. This has remained true up to the present day as regards shrines *(rten mkhar* and *lha gtsug)* and cairns (*la btsas / la rtse*) erected for indigenous and protective deities, whose precedents can be traced to pre-Buddhist times. The endurance of early physical forms is also seen in the arena of rock art, where archaic motifs, such as the hunting of ungulates, continued to be expressed in historical period paintings and carvings, surviving perhaps as late as the missionary activities of the bKa' brgyud pa subsects, in the 11th to 13th centuries CE. The survivability of the tradition of building all-stone meditation houses (*rdo khang*) is indicated by its economic utility in a region with few trees. In rare instances, such as Shel 'dra, at Gangs Ti se (see pp. 53, 54), their use and maintenance has continued to the present day, while more monumental ancient building types have been long abandoned. Although it is now the exception, the continued exploitation of all-stone meditation houses may be an indication that the tradition of constructing them endured until relatively late.[10]

On the other hand, pillar typologies associated with enclosures, graves and accompanying edifices unmistakably belong to the pre-Buddhist cultural context, and it is not likely that their use and construction postdates the Imperial period. The earliest precedent for these types of monuments is found in the eastern steppe regions of Mongolia and the Altai beginning no later than circa 1000 BCE (see introductory sections of Type-VIII and Type-IX archaeological monuments). All-stone fortresses and religious centers are also typologies that unmistakably developed in the pre-Buddhist period. On the basis of their close geographic, cultural and technical association (prominently featuring the use of stone slabs and dry mortar masonry techniques) with Tibetan pillar

3. For an exposition of this multidimensional approach see Bellezza 2001, pp. 16-26.
4. A cross section of these historical materials from secondary sources are reviewed in Bellezza 2001, pp. 49-52.
5. The index to the sNar thang edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* mentions that Imperial Tibetan troops left in the Byang thang (northern Tibet) to guard the Sino-Tibetan frontier were supplanted by the *'brog [pa]* under the command of a person of the lDongs btsan lineage (Thomas 1935: 310, 302).
6. Tibetan documents discovered in Central Asia record the founding of a fort in Mazar Tagh during the Tibetan conquest in the second half of the 8th century, one of numerous outposts established in Eastern Turkestan in the Imperial period (Thomas 1951: 185, 217, 313, 314).
7. Imperial period inscriptions from La dwags indicate that the Tibetanization of the western fringe of the Tibetan plateau was already underway in this period (Denwood 1995; 1980: 155-163). This epigraphic evidence possibly shows that the Zhang zhung language had been in use in the region.
8. *'Brog* as a people and region of Upper Tibet are mentioned in Imperial period Tibetan documents from Central Asia (Thomas 1951: 297-299).
9. A comprehensive survey of these anachronistic traditions is found in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.
10. Much more humble structures built for kids and lambs *(ri'u tshang* and *lug tshang*) in Upper Tibet, and small shelters for herders (*'brog lhas*) in La dwags, which sometimes incorporate *mani* walls, are the remaining examples of all-stone buildings still being constructed in Upper Tibet and the western fringe of the plateau today.

and grave typologies, the origins of monumental architecture can also probably be traced to the First Millennium BCE.[11]

In its incipient stage the development of monumental architecture could have begun as early as the Central Asian Late Bronze Age, as indicated by comparative archaeological data from Central Asia.[12] However, the establishment of an extensive system of fortifications over a very large area, as in many other regions of Eurasia, has the cultural hallmarks of an Iron Age trait. Consequently, there is no justification to believe that the construction of the broad network of fortresses and the architecturally related religious centers in Upper Tibet predates the period of the Early Iron Age in the eastern steppes. Primarily this form of development is a defensive response probably based, in large measure, on an external threat and none are known from the archaeological record of Inner Asia before the large-scale east and southward movements of the steppe bronze peoples, which began around 1500 BCE and continued with their Iron Age successors (early nomads) for more than a millennium. The large number of pre-Buddhist fortresses and religious centers exhibiting significant design, size and site variability combined with the absence of posterior pre-Buddhist architectural typologies suggests that they were constructed and used over a very long period of time. Moreover, their long term dominance presupposes the operation of stable cultural and economic systems in Upper Tibet. In certain situations monumental all-stone edifices may even have been built as late as the *bstan pa phyi dar,* and in exceptional instances their occupation continued until fairly recently.[13]

In Upper Tibet the Neolithic is primarily represented by chance surface finds of stone tools and other lithic materials (see Chayet 1994: 36-49), and archaeological evidence of monuments from this period has not been documented.[14] Similarly, evidence of the Chalcolithic is highly obscure, and megalithic sites from this period have not been positively identified. The existence of monuments belonging to remote epochs in agricultural regions of Upper Tibet analogous to the developed Central Asian Bronze Age have not been identified either. If indeed monumental architecture was known in Second Millennium BCE, or earlier, its morphological, design and constructional characteristics are so far indistinguishable from posterior forms.[15] Possibly, the earliest monuments documented on the Upper Tibet Circumambulation Expedition are certain grave typologies that could potentially date to the Second Millennium BCE, but a conclusive determination will only be achieved when systematic excavation is conducted.[16]

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11. According to Tibetan tradition, the oldest fortresses and palaces of Yar lung (= Yar klungs) in southern Tibet are thought to date to the late First Millennium BCE. Among them in the Pho brang valley are the remains of forts that might date to the fourth or third century BCE (Hummel 2000a: 12). According to popular tradition, the hilltop palace of 'Om bu Gla sgang (so named for its tamarisk trees) was the residence of the first king of Tibet, gNya' khri bTsan po (Das 1902: 1121; *Tsig mdzod chen mo* 1993: 2536). Another ancient residence in the region was 'Phying pa sTag rtse, which is often believed to have been founded by Tibet's ninth king, sPu lde Gung rgyal (*Tsig mdzod chen mo* 1993: 1788). The 15th chapter of the *rGyal po bka' thang yig* mentions that the first fortress (*mkhar la sna ba*) of Yar lung, Sham po dGu brtsegs, was founded by King gNya' khri bTsan po. Other early residential castles (*pho brang sku mkhar*) of Yar lung mentioned in this account are Khra dang Bya ra of Tibet's eighth king, Gri gum bTsan po; Khri brtsigs 'Bum gdugs of Tibet's ninth king, sPu lde Gung rgyal; 'Phyi nga sTag rtse of Tibet's 24th king, sTong ri sTong btsan; Yum (= 'Om) bu bLa mkhar of Tibet's 28th king, Lha tho tho ri gNyan btsan; and Lha sa dMar po ri, the personal castle (*sku mkhar*) of King Srong btsan sGam po. For a translation and transliteration of this passage see Haarh 1969, pp. 99-100.
12. It was not until after the collapse of the Central Asian proto-urban oases of the developed Bronze Age that a new set of agricultural centers appeared in the Late Bronze Age (Second Millennium BCE), characterized by fortified settlements built in part as a response to steppe bronze tribal incursions. For example, fortified settlements are known in the Sapalli culture (middle reaches of the Amu Darya) and the Murghab culture (southern Turkmenistan) in this period (Masson 1992a: 337-345). It was also in the Late Bronze Age, in Bactriana, that temples and forts began to be constructed in the same areas (Litvinsky and P'yankova 1992: 380). Subsequently, at the end of the Second Millennium BCE and the beginning of the First Millennium BCE, with the emergence of a centralized state in pre-Achaemenian Bactria, citadels constructed on large platforms appeared (Askarov 1992: 455, 456). In cis-Himalayan Himachal Pradesh, the epoch of fortress construction is traced to the post-urban phase of Harappa (1500-500 BCE) and the 99 hill forts of King Shambara, who was defeated by the Aryan King Sudasa after 40 years of fighting (Singh 1983: 161, 162). According to the *Rig Veda*, the Austric serpent worshipping tribes, the Ahis and Danavas under King Shambara, were allied against the Aryans from their strongholds in the outer Himalaya (Handa 1994: 66).
13. In Shen rtsa county an archaic all-stone building called rDzong Ser was in regular use until the Communist period (Bellezza 2000a: 16; 2001: 88, 89).
14. As early as the Neolithic, wide-ranging cultural intercourse possibly based on migrations and trade between the loess plateau of China and the northern Indian subcontinent may have had a significant impact on Upper Tibet. Two unmistakable material objects of the antecedent Yangshao culture found in Neolithic sites from Swat and Kashmir are jade beads and semi-lunar perforated harvesters, and mat impressions on the bases of some pots and semi-subterranean dwellings are also common to all three regions (Sharif and Thapar 1992: 148, 149). These kinds of links indicate that circa the early Third Millennium BCE cultural influences from north China penetrated into the Indian subcontinent (*ibid*. 148, 149). The same types of stone knives for harvesting associated with the Yangshao culture have also been found in central Tibet sites (An Zhimin 1992a: 164).
15. It is not surprising that antecedent construction typologies have not been recognized because the use of drystone masonry and corbelled stone-slab roofs are an elementary building technique found in various parts of the ancient world, including the British isles. For several examples see Fletcher 1992, pp. 195, 196.
16. What appears to be the rather tardy appearance of monuments in Upper Tibet must be due to the persistence of a mobile Neolithic society in Upper Tibet well into the Second Millennium BCE. This observation is borne out by archaeological data from western China

The evidence thus far assembled indicates that the large majority of pre-Buddhist sites documented on the Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition, as well as those found on the author's earlier expeditions, span a period of roughly 1500 years; 600 BCE to 850 CE (see the introductions to the various archaeological typologies). The first approximately 600 years of this profound continuum of time is represented in analogous archaeological terms by the Iron Age of the eastern steppes, the latter centuries by the protohistorical period of the early Tibetan kings followed by the Imperial (early historical) period in Tibet. A more precise periodization is not possible at this juncture due to the lack of chronometric studies, and the inability to formulate a stadial model based on successive stages in the development of the various monument typologies.

SECTION II: INDIGENOUS TRAITS OF PRE-BUDDHIST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN UPPER TIBET

According to the oral tradition of Upper Tibet, the various pillar typologies, and the all-stone religious buildings and fortresses, were constructed by the ancient Mon. Specifically at Dang ra g.Yu mtsho and the Khyung lung valley, such monuments are said to have been founded by the people of Zhang zhung.[17] As there are no typological or constructional differences between sites attributed to the Mon and Zhang zhung, these popular identities must be viewed as historically interrelated. Almost invariably all grave sites wherever their location are attributed to the Mon. Particularly in the eastern Byang thang, the less frequent ancient ruins located in this region are connected to the early Bon po, as well as legendary characters in the Ge sar epic.[18]

These disparate legendary and historical attributions are symptomatic of both the

and Tibet which show that microliths associated with an economy based on hunting were still in use after the emergence of metal tools and vessels in the loess plateau of China (An Zhimin 1992a: 165; Huang 1994). For example, in Xinjiang the predominance of microliths as surface finds suggests that farming cultures developed late (An Zhimin 1992a: 153, 164). Neolithic people of Inner Mongolia had temporary shelters along rivers and lakes, and lived by stock-breeding and hunting (*ibid*. 164, 165;), settlement and economic conditions mirrored in Upper Tibet. Even in the southeastern Tibet Karuo culture (3300-1800 BCE), which enjoyed a long period of settled development, hunting remained an important economic activity (*ibid*.: 165, 166).

17. According to Bon sources, Zhang zhung with its tripartite divisions covered a very large area. In a map attached to the *sGra yi don sdeb snang gsal sgron me* written by Nyi ma Grags pa (born 1853), the region known as Zhang zhung sGo pa'i skor extended from the western Tibetan borderlands across the Byang thang to sTeng chen and east along the Yar lung gTsang po to rKong po. This map (p. 25) and a discussion of the geographic extent of Zhang zhung are found in Hummel 2000b.

18. Several myths are commonly connected to the origins of pre-Buddhist archaeological sites in Upper Tibet by local residents. These revolve around figures in the Ge sar epic (such as Lha mo 'Brug mo, A thag Klu mo and Mon Shing khri rGyal po) and self-generation (*rang byon*). See Bellezza 2000a; 2001.

remote temporal nature of the pre-Buddhist period and the lamaist-inspired suppression of its cultural achievements. As is well known, lamaist culture has relentlessly assimilated and effaced earlier beliefs and practices it has deemed unorthodox or heretical for a over one millennium. In the contemporary period this trend is most pronounced in Tibetan exile and Himalayan rim-land communities. As regards pre-Buddhist monuments this sociocultural movement towards less plurality has had the effect of uprooting sites from their historical context by encouraging the creation of solely mythological attributions. This process, of course, has parallels throughout the world as new civilizational criteria and priorities take precedence over older forms. In contemporary Tibet an unfortunate byproduct of changing cultural and economic paradigms is that increasingly pre-Buddhist archaeological sites are viewed as a mining commodity supplying cheap and convenient sources of building stones.

The existence of Zhang zhung at least up to the mid-7th century is indisputably established by references in the Tun-huang manuscripts and by the Bon literary tradition, although these accounts are limited in scope, the former by their brevity and the latter by their hagiographic and mythological obscurations.[19] There are numerous historical references showing that far western Tibet continued to be referred to as Zhang zhung at least until the 14th century.[20] As for the ancient Mon their identity and even very existence is complicated by the non-specific use of the term. It denotes diverse groups with a wide geographic purview in both the early and historical era, which includes peoples of the cis-Himalaya, as well as both a race once inhabiting western Tibet and the contemporary Mon of La dwags and Baltistan.[21] However, there can be no doubt that the use of the ethnonym Mon is ancient, as proven by its occurrence in Imperial period Tibetan documents found in Central Asia (Thomas 1951: 299). For example, these documents record that one of the consorts of King Srong btsan sGam po was a Mon woman (*ibid*. 299). The homeland of the Mon in Upper Tibet in the Imperial period is unclear but it might be referred to in documents of the time by the ethnonymn Hor Mon.

Whether the ancient Mon of the oral histories and legends of Upper Tibet actually represent the aborigines of Upper Tibet, west of gNam ru, or a later ethnical addition to the population that ruled over the area has not been established. Nonetheless, along with the inhabitants of Zhang zhung, they are locally attributed with the bulk of pre-Buddhist archaeological remains in the Byang thang from Nag tshang west to La dwags. The same archaeological folklore exists for the sGar and Glang chen valleys in mNga' ris, and for regions south of the Gangs dkar range east from 'Brong pa to extreme southwestern Tibet. Most crucially, the region described by oral sources corresponds with the distribution of the pillar and grave typologies of Upper Tibet, as well as the all-stone fortresses and religious centers. Pillars erected inside rectangular enclosures and

19. For a cross-section of some of these sources see Bellezza 2001, pp. 47-49, 53-68; Dagkar 1997; Karmay 1972.

20. See Klimburg-Salter 1997, p. 32; as well as numerous examples in Vitali 1996.

21. For a discussion of this topic see Murty 1969; Bellezza 2001, pp. 40-42.

fields of stelae forming quadrangular arrays were a distinctive and widespread cultural feature of Upper Tibet from Nag tshang westwards. They have not been documented by the author in gNam ru, gNam mTsho, Bar rta, A mdo, Nag chu, sNyan rong nor any other Byang thang region east of 88 degrees east longitude. Likewise, the greatest concentration of archaic forts and religious edifices closely corresponds to the distribution of the characteristic pillar typologies.

The remarkable uniformity displayed by early monuments, particularly the pillar typologies, across Upper Tibet west of gNam ru in the Byang thang and west of 'Brong pa in the upper Yar lung valley, documents the existence of a singular pre-Buddhist cultural entity. A comparative study of Scytho-Siberian archaeological monuments and inner Asian rock art indicates that this culture had developed its unique features by the First Millennium BCE. The development of a common Upper Tibet pre-Buddhist culture must be seen in the context of the region's extremely high altitude, its unusual geographical and ecological traits, and its relative isolation. The distinctive features of the productive economy where stock-rearing was predominant but with agriculture playing a vital role also helped to shape the formation of an integral cultural identity. As no systematic anthropometric or molecular archaeological studies have been conducted on the early inhabitants of Upper Tibet, and linguistic research being inconclusive, we will for the time being have to rely on indigenous terminology to describe this culture. I therefore propose the use of the generic term Zhang zhung-Mon to archaeologically designate the pre-Buddhist population of Upper Tibet west of 88 degrees east longitude from the First Millennium BCE to the beginning of the Imperial period in the early 7th century as reflected in the common tradition of monuments and rock art. It is important to note, lest this label be misconstrued, that it does not necessarily infer the existence of just one ethnic population inhabiting Tibet for around 1500 years, nor that the kingdom of Zhang zhung was so long lived.

The pre-Buddhist culture of regions in Upper Tibet east of 88 degrees east longitude, as demonstrated in rock art, its early Bon heritage and the scanty monumental record, was closely related to its western neighbor. However, the eastern Byang thang does not appear to have had a well developed sedentary cultural component suggesting that it was not as economically advanced or as heavily populated. These important contrasts in the archaeological record may be attributable to an ethnohistorical or tribal watershed that existed across the breadth of Upper Tibet in pre-Buddhist times. If ethnical divisions are represented by the two archaeological regions it may have involved Zhang zhung and the neighboring pre-Buddhist nation of Sum pa to the east.[22]

22. The Bon cosmological text *mDzod sgra 'grel* delineates the countries surrounding Tibet in the Imperial period according to popular geographic convention (folio 28): "The territories of the four horns (*ru bzhi*) of Tibet are situated north of Mon, south of Hor, below the 10,000 divisions (*khri sde*) of high Zhang zhung, and above the 1000 divisions of low-lying Sum pa" (stod zhang zhung khri sde'i ma so nas / smad sum pa stong sde'i ya so nas / lho byang hor mon gyi nang so na / ru bzhi bod kyi sa skor yod do /). For bibliographic information on this text see p. 44, n. 45.

Geographical distinctions in the archaeological record might also be indicative that although the eastern Byang thang receives higher rainfall, its turf blanketed plains were less inviting for permanent settlement than the open valleys and basins of the west.

The Zhang zhung-Mon culture might in turn be subdivided into two archaeological phases; the prehistoric, correlating to the Scytho-Siberian Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, and the protohistorical period, commensurate with the development of the burial mound culture in southern Tibet (see pp. 77, 78) and the semi-mythical line of 31 Tibetan kings. However, as chronologies have not yet been developed for the pre-Buddhist sites surveyed by the author this subdivision remains largely unverifiable. Unfortunately, there is no determination of when Tibet entered her Iron Age but it could not have begun before its manifestation in Central Asia and on the Indian Subcontinent, which lie in closer proximity to the early iron working centers of Asia Minor.[23] As distinctions in monument typologies have not surfaced nor archaeological benchmarks of any other kind for the Iron Age in Upper Tibet, we may for the time being consider the protohistorical period as representing an anachronistic extension of the Iron Age cultural system.[24] The heirs of the Zhang zhung-Mon culture were the Imperial period Tibetans who were substantially interrelated ethnically, linguistically and culturally; although in ways not yet well understood.

An extensive system of fortresses, religious buildings, permanent villages and elaborate funerary monuments clearly presupposes the existence of a powerful ruling and priestly elite in pre-Buddhist Upper Tibet. Except perhaps in agrarian localities, the evidence implies that the majority of the population lived in portable structures such as the yak hair tent (*sbra nag*). The widespread distribution of religious, fortress and funerary typologies in geographic clusters across the Zhang zhung-Mon cultural region indicates

23. The introduction of iron in Central Asia took place in the first half of the First Millennium BCE, in cultures such as Yaz I (Negmatov 1994: 451, 452; Askarov 1992: 452, 453). By 400 to 300 BCE, iron articles and tools became widespread in Mongolia and throughout Inner Asia (Ishjamts 1994: 152; Askarov 1992: 441; Askarov *et al.* 1992: 465, 466). Iron objects also appear in eastern Turkestan, in the graves of Tashkurgan dated between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE (Ma Yong and Wang Binghua 1994: 210). In India iron technology is associated with the painted grayware culture and possibly the Vedic Aryans (Lal 1992: 437-440).

24. According to the religious and genealogical histories *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma,* written by bSod nams Grags pa (1478-1554), and *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long,* by Sa skya pa bSod nams rGyal mtshan (1312-1375), it was during the time of the ninth Tibetan king, sPu lde Gung rgyal and his younger brother Ru la skyes, a minister, that Tibetans began to mine and work iron, silver and copper. See the translation and reproduction of bSod nams Grags pa's text (Tucci 1971, p. 142, folio no. 16), and the translation of bSod nams rGyal mtshan's text (Sakyapa Sonam Gyaltsen 1996, p. 86, translated by M. Taylor and Choedak Yuthok). Tibetan iron-working metallurgy had reached very high levels in the Imperial period suggesting development over several centuries. Tibetans knew techniques of quench-hardening and grinding, and produced ample supplies of armor and swords for their troops. See Mu Shun-ying and Wang Yao 1994, p. 363.

a high degree of interaction between the ruling and priestly elite, and the existence of a polity founded upon this infrastructural network. There are also economic implications alluding to a highly developed system of trade and communications, and the efficient organization of the population into cooperative workforces. These manifold features suggest civic interconnections that must have manifested themselves either in a tribal confederacy or a fully developed decentralized state. However, until the chronology of Upper Tibet pre-Buddhist archaeological sites is refined we will not be able to elucidate how these political traditions arose and evolved in the prehistoric and protohistorical periods.

Major loci of sedentary pre-Buddhist settlement in Upper Tibet include the basins of the large lakes (gNam mTsho, Ngang rtse mTsho, Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, bKra ri gNam mtsho, Da rog mTsho, sTong mTsho mTsho Ma pham, mTsho mo Ngang lha Ring mo, etc.) and the important valley systems rTa mchog (upper Brahmaputra), sGar, Glang chen (Sutlej), gZhung pa, Ru thog, Ra spang, Senge (Indus), rMa bya (Karnali) and Tshwa kha, as well as being disbursed in many other localities. Pre-Buddhist settlements were more widely distributed than their historical counterparts and they were routinely established at significantly higher elevations. Consequently, pre-Buddhist monuments are frequently located in areas that are now devoid of permanent settlement. The war-like and vigorous nature of the early inhabitants is one factor explaining the florescence of pre-Buddhist culture in a marginal environment. Nevertheless, it is also due to more conducive climatic conditions that prevailed in the distant past.

SECTION III: THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF UPPER TIBET

The climatic history of Upper Tibet in the Late Holocene is vital to our understanding of the environmental conditions pre-Buddhist inhabitants were forced to adapt to. The mechanisms devised to not only cope but to flourish in one of the most difficult environments in the world can furnish us with insight into how certain monumental forms developed. Climate history is also essential for a clarification of past settlement patterns and how these have changed over the millennia.[25] Paleoenvironmental conditions in Upper Tibet also provide us with a hypothetical groundwork for explaining the disappearance of pre-Buddhist civilization and the subsequent utter destitution of many of its foci of settlement.

One of the largest interdisciplinary studies of the paleoclimate of Tibet to date was carried out by a Sino-French expedition at sPang gong mTsho, in Ru thog, in 1989. The proxy climatic data presented here was obtained from the detailed scientific reports published by members of this expedition, which provide us with authoritative, but as of yet still incomplete data, on the nature of climatic change in Upper Tibet.[26] In particular,

25. This topic is discussed at some length in Bellezza 2001, pp. 22-25.
26. A synopsis of the findings of other studies concerned with the paleoclimate of Tibet can be found in Bellezza 1997a, pp. 438, 439; 2001, pp. 11-16.

the chronology of the last 2000 years needs to be refined and must be considered with caution (Gasse *et al.* 1996: 84, 88). The Sino-French expedition noted that the ancient shorelines of lakes in western Tibet, which are tens to hundreds of meters above present day lake levels, reveal large-scale climatic and hydrological changes during the late Quaternary (Fontes *et al.* 1996: 25). Corrected radiocarbon ages of fossil material, collected from the Sino-French 12.4 meter piston core sunk in east sPang gong mTsho, indicates that beginning 6200 years ago, there was a non-linear return to aridity, which was particularly pronounced approximately 3900 to 3200 years ago and 1300 years ago (*ibid*. 25, 30, 44). Thirteen hundred years ago the eastern basin of sPang gong mTsho closed in response to aridity on the catchment (*ibid*. 25, 44). Palnyostratigraphical methods applied to the same sPang gong mTsho core also demonstrate a trend towards aridity beginning around 6500 years ago with dry events centered in 5500, 3900 to 3200 and 700 years before present (Campo *et al.* 1996: 49, 58, 62). Moreover, the mean percentage of cyperaceae pollen is much higher in the fossil record than in the modern surface samples, suggesting a local origin (*ibid*. 56).[27]

An analysis of the constituent organic components of the sPang gong mTsho core indicate that there was a last lacustrine event of minor amplitude between 3000 and 2000 years ago before the closure of the system (Fan Hui *et al.* 1996: 65, 76). The resemblance and synchronism between environmental changes recorded at sPang gong mTsho and gSum bzhi mTsho, located 200 kilometers to the north and 800 meters higher, shows that regional climatic changes have been the primary cause of the ecological and hydrobiological modifications in lakes of western Tibet (*ibid*. 65, 77). A period of extremely low diatom content 3900 to 3200 years before present, was succeeded by the re-establishment of lacustrine conditions more favorable to life, but water levels in this period were lower than in the Early and Middle Holocene (*ibid*. 75, 76). In the final stage, 2000 years ago to present, diatom content in sPang gong mTsho fell rapidly and there was an increase in the percentage of saline water species, which can be attributed to regional climatic change (*ibid*. 76, 77). Radiocarbon chronology of the sPang gong core material suggests an extremely low sedimentation rate 2100 years to 1300 years before present, which implies very dry conditions (Gasse *et al.* 1996: 84). After a period of probable maximum aridity 1200 to 1000 years ago, a trend towards moister conditions was detected at sPang gong mTsho (*ibid*. 84). The climatic record deduced from a three meter core taken from gSer gling (Zi leng) mTsho, in Nag tshang, likewise indicates that there were two major aridity maxima: 4200 to 3300 years ago and 2400 to 1400 years ago, with a moister period in between (*ibid*. 89). In the last 1400 years there are also indications from gSer gling mTsho of a trend towards a slightly moister climate.

27. Nearly 100 years ago, A.H. Francke noted that in the adjacent region of La dwags roots of juniper trees were discovered in various places demonstrating, for example, that this species of tree was once found in the sLel valley. Francke observed that their disappearance in lower La dwags could be attributed to the gradual desiccation of the climate. See Francke 1905, p. 208.

Scientific studies cited above agree that the Middle Holocene in Upper Tibet was characterized by a period of optimum climate. However, the more favorable environmental conditions encountered by Neolithic man in the Middle Holocene gave way to a general trend towards a deteriorating climate and environment in the Late Holocene. While the specific impact of wet and dry pulses in the climate of the Late Holocene on the development of civilization in Upper Tibet is still well beyond our grasp, long term desiccation could only have had deleterious consequences for human settlement in the region. The development of the Zhang zhung-Mon cultural and political entity and its subsequent demise beginning 1400 years ago must be seen in an environmental context for, as the above studies indicate, it had to grapple with exceptionally harsh environmental conditions. This is not to suggest that climate change, played a deterministic role in the fortunes of Zhang zhung, but there is no question that it had a negative effect on economic systems of production, especially those of an agrarian nature. Perhaps the biggest implication of the eroding climate was that it may have helped definitively shift the balance of power to the Yar lung state, located in a region with a significantly warmer and moister climate. Lower elevation and more humid southern Tibet could better cope with the effects of a deteriorating climate and was inherently in a better environmental position to benefit from moister climatic events than was the north and west of the plateau.

Description of Typologies and Inventory of Archaeological Sites

Type-I: Hilltop forts, palaces and other edifices built on summits

The most dominant and earliest example of this typology in Upper Tibet is the group of all-stone fortresses and fortified settlements referred to in the common parlance of the region as Mon mkhar / Mon gyi mkhar.[1] At Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, castles and fortified settlements exhibiting the same architectural characteristics and building techniques are attributed by the local population to the pre-Buddhist kingdom of Zhang zhung.[2] The Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology is typified by all-stone construction. From a survey of these strongholds, it is clear that despite the discrepancy in attributed identities found in the oral legends and histories, they are assigned to a particular type of monument with common cultural and historical roots (Bellezza 2001: 28). This typology frequently occurs from the east shore of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho to the very western fringes of the Tibetan plateau. There is however, no evidence that it existed as a common architectural type east of eastern Nag tshang (Shen rtsa county). While there are a few edifices built on summits in the eastern Byang thang attributed by local sources to the pre-Buddhist cultural milieu, these poorly preserved remains are not large enough to represent the most common Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology.

Without the requisite chronometric data, the periodization of the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology poses a very difficult problem. All we can assert is that the wide distribution and frequency of the typology, in tandem with the ecological constraints favoring its development, suggest a persistence that spanned many centuries. Using

1. The first researcher to document castles attributed to the ancient Mon in far western Tibet was G. Tucci on his 1933 scientific mission. These include mKhar po che in Byang thang, and castles in sNu and Lug, all located in the Glang chen gTsang po district of Rong chung (rTsa mda' county). See Tucci and Ghersi 1934: pp. 198, 199, 210-212, 232, figs. 168-172.
2. For example, the great fortresses of Dang ra Khyung rDzong, Khyi tshe rDzong (more commonly called Ser mDzod rDzong), Hang thal rDzong (Hang dal rDzong) and 'Bum nang rDzong (also called Gang lung Lha rtse rDzong), among others in the Dang ra g.Yu mtsho region, are associated with Zhang zhung. See La stod 'Jam dpal, p. 64. For a survey of these fortresses see Bellezza 1996; 1997a; 2000a; 2001.

the Tibetan slab grave and pillar typologies, which share the same geographic distribution and techniques of construction, as an indication these fortresses could have been founded as early as the Central Asian Late Bronze Age, circa 1000 BCE. The tradition of building the archaic all-stone fortresses reinforced by the inherent shortage of wood in Upper Tibet must have continued at least through the Tibetan expansionist Imperial period. Ecological limitations would have had the effect of preserving the typology for a very long period simply because it was admirably adapted to local environmental conditions. Its extremely robust construction required no wood and it could withstand one of the fiercest climates in the world.

Walls of the Zhang zhung-Mon castles were almost invariably constructed using the random rubble technique of meticulously laying uncut stones, up to one meter in length, in irregular courses. In most instances the walls appear to have been unmortared or only lightly cemented with mud mortar. This building technique is also found in Dar khung rtse, a castle attributed to the Mon in Zangs dkar (Howard 1995: 82, 83).[3] There are however, instances when random-work walls were built with copious mud mortar.[4] Frequently, especially in buildings occupying isolated summits, a revetment or retaining wall was constructed around the rim of the formation as a load-bearing structure. These retaining walls also served as defensive bulwarks. Individual buildings are commonly one storey and more infrequently two stories tall. No conclusive structural evidence for taller buildings has yet been collected. The buildings contained multiple small rooms, averaging around four to seven square meters each. These rooms were oblong, oval or irregularly-shaped. Small buildings with just a few rooms are most common. The walls of the rooms are often buttressed, which has the effect of creating partitions and vestibules, as well as structural support for the roof.

From the structural evidence surviving we know that roofs were flat, all-stone and built in the distinctive manner that is also found in early religious edifices and habitations. At the top of the walls roof braces or corbels were inserted to act as support for the stone roof beams. These roof appurtenances either run diagonally across the corners of the walls or were installed to directly span opposite walls. Vertically arranged layers of corbels and roof beams often form cantilevered structures but these are not sufficiently

3. Carefully constructed dry or lightly mud mortared walls containing stones up to 75 centimeters in length like those found at Dar khung rtse may not be known in the architecture of La dwags and Zans dkar after the 10th century. Another site, Suryamati's Castle, whose name according to A.H. Francke, suggests that it was established before the 10th century, also exhibits dry mortar, random-rubble walls in all of the structures. See Howard 1995, pp. 82, 83; 1989, pp. 266, 268, 269.
4. This building technique is also known from much more recent times in Upper Tibet, although it is associated with roofs built of wood. For example monasteries at Ti se and Ma pham g.Yu mtsho often incorporated these types of walls in their construction. In general, they do not exhibit the technical proficiency of the ancient dry mortar variety. In La dwags and Zangs dkar random-texture, mud-mortared stone walls appear to have been constructed up to the 16th century and even in the last 200 years (Howard 1995: 79).

developed to produce what in architectographic nomenclature are called corbel arches or pseudo-arches. Stone sheathing in the form of cut slabs overlay the beams to complete the roof. There is also scant evidence at certain sites to indicate that the stone sheathing was covered by layers of gravel and clay in order to weatherproof the roofs.[5]

Zhang zhung-Mon fortresses as a rule occupy highly defensible locations protected from attack directed from below by the vertical or near vertical walls of the mountains they sit on. They were also usually impervious to attack directed from above by being purposefully set either on isolated outcrops or offset from higher terrain. Generally Zhang zhung-Mon fortresses are comprised of numerous buildings that were vertically arranged in tiers on cliffs and steep outcrops terminating in what was often the largest single installation located on the very acme of the formation. Every effort was made to integrate natural rock faces in their construction for added strength and to economize on labor and building materials. Ramparts built around the base of the installations and curtainwalls connecting various dependencies on outlying ridges are also characteristic features. Like the buildings themselves, the defensive walls were constructed of random-work. Small fortified outposts consisting of all-stone buildings are sometimes found in strategic locations in the vicinity of the main facility.

The Zhang zhung-Mon strongholds integrated barracks, cooking and storage facilities, other dependencies, and the quarters of the chieftains and / or priests all within the same tight cluster of buildings. We might surmise that the larger buildings on the summits were designed for the leadership. However, there are no stables in the Zhang zhung-Mon *mkhar* for the rugged locations are not suited for horses. The smaller Zhang zhung-Mon *mkhar* would seem to have exclusively served as military garrisons, while the much larger complexes of multiple buildings, especially those arrayed on large level summits or with significant structural detritus at the foot of the hill, may have incorporated a broader spectrum of society within their auspices. I refer to these as fortresses (forts and castles) and fortified settlements respectively, but hasten to add that this distinction is based on a visual appraisal of the ruins and is but a tentative assignment of possible variations in function.

In mNga' ris prefecture there are also edifices found on summits that were constructed with roofs supported by wooden beams, as indicated by the long spans between unbutressed walls, which are also attributed to the Mon.[6] However, this very different

5. In La dwags the same technique for constructing an all-stone roof is known from just one site among 15 that have been studied in the region, contemporary *'brog sa* shelters notwithstanding. It is found in the remains of a small fort called Nyar ma located above sLel, the center of which is a tower with a forebuilding to the south. The lintel over the entranceway of the forebuilding is supported by stone corbels and the roof over the passageways inside are made of stones that rest upon corbels. It has been noted that this roofing technique and the overall conception of the fortress may indicate great antiquity. See Howard 1989, pp. 269-272.
6. In La dwags and Zangs dkar, fortresses exhibiting diverse styles of construction have been labeled Mon *mkhar* in the oral legends of the local inhabitants. In Bellezza (2001: 41) we review the pioneering work on the part of A. H. Francke at the turn of the 20th

style of construction may represent a later architectural and cultural phase and cannot yet be confidently assigned to the pre-Buddhist period (Bellezza: 2000a: 11). Walls built of mud mortared coursed rubble (such as Ru thog bShan pa'i mkhar), as well as those made of adobe blocks found at a few sites, also represent variant typologies, which could have a historical period origin. In the Zhang zhung-Mon *mkhar* I have surveyed defensive towers with round, D-shaped and rectangular plans are not present, nor do structures have loopholes or banded-texture style walls. In La dwags and Zangs dkar these types of features seem to postdate the *bstan pa phyi dar* (Howard 1995: 80, 84-86, 90-93; 1989: 218, 219). The Zhang zhung-Mon mkhar typology must also be distinguished from the style of fortress prevailing in central and southern Tibet with its tall tapering walls and roof constructed of wooden rafters. These fundamental architectural contrasts are probably indicative of cultural, environmental and possibly chronological differences existing between the fortresses of the lower regions of Tibet and those of Upper Tibet.

A survey of more than three dozen examples of the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology demonstrates that they were usually founded near ancient agricultural settlements and major pastures. Their areal distribution indicates that they played a key role in the economic and cultural life of the pre-Buddhists, as well as representing the nerve centers of local political power. Their role as cultural and economic hubs is underlined by the paucity of other types of permanent habitations in the vicinity of most castles and fortified settlements. Of course at some locations sedentarism also manifested itself in religious facilities of various kinds and in villages, but these were never numerous enough to account for but a small segment of the total pre-Buddhist population of Upper Tibet. As with the sparse network of permanent structures existing in Upper Tibet in the pre-Communist period, the pre-Buddhist castles, fortified settlements, monolithic complexes and ritual centers constituted the non-movable social, religious and political infrastructure of the inhabitants. Another important parallel between the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods is that the majority of the population involved in the productive economy of hunting and stock-rearing lived in portable yak hair tents (*sbra nag*). In a few select agricultural regions, such as Ru thog, sGar, sPu Hrang and Dang ra g.Yu

century to systematically record these sites. Beginning in the late 1980s, these 'Mon' sites were revisited by N. Howard (1989; 1995), who made an attempt to establish a relative chronology based on a visual appraisal of the techniques of construction in the associated edifices. Howard's methodological approach proved the most sound when applied to fortresses and palaces built in the last 400 years, which could be correlated with literary evidence. However his observations that castles ascribed to the Mon by Francke postdate the *bstan pa phyi dar* remain conjectural and unverifiable. A particular problem regarding identification in La dwags and Zangs dkar is that it would seem ancient forts were often redeveloped or otherwise altered, masking the original remains. In contrast, in Upper Tibet, with few exceptions (such as Ru thog bShan pa'i mkhar, see Bellezza 2000a: 21, 22; 2001: 102-104), the fortresses attributed to the Mon and Zhang zhung kingdom appear to have undergone little or no historical era renovation.

mtsho, the population must have been settled in permanent villages just as they are today, but physical evidence of this early settlement has been obscured by successive periods of habitation.

Let us now turn to an important quasi-historical reference found in Bon literature briefly describing the role that the pre-Buddhist Zhang zhung seat of power Khyung lung dNgul mkhar and its 18 subsidiary era castles played in the political geography of the time, and the manner in which they were connected to the instruments of religious power. The historical veracity of this *Kun 'bum* account.[7] and its 18 castles is difficult to establish. However, the mandala-like description of the sacred sites has an unmistakable mnemonic quality about it as would be found in an oral tradition that was handed down verbally for many generations. The joint religious and political order it refers to is cited in many other Tibetan literary sources as a fundamental institution existing in the pre-Buddhist state.[8] Moreover, the indivisible interrelationship of the priestly and ruling classes attested in our text was characteristic of many Eurasian societies in remote antiquity:[9]

> [sTon pa Shes rab] came down from ['Ol mo lung ring] to the middle of the Zhang zhung sgo country of g.Yung drung Mu le in which there is the crystal snow mountain rTa sgo[10] and the basin of Ma phang g.Yu mtsho. In the blessed and lucky land of Khyung valley a castle was magically constructed. To tame the borders 18 subsidiary castles were constructed.[11] To tame the outer [regions]

7. For another translation of this passage see Ramble 1995, pp. 92, 93.
8. An examination of a few Bon literary sources depicting how the priestly and ruling elite dispensed their power hand in hand is found in Bellezza 2001, pp. 63-68. See also, p. 79, n. 1.
9. The text under consideration known in full as *Kun 'bum khro bo bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs legs so* forms a chapter in the *Kun 'bum rgya che*, which is volume 167 of the Bon *bKa' 'gyur* (Si khron Hru'u phang dpar khang, published by Kun grol Lha sras Mi pham rNam rgyal, in 1996). This circa 13th century text rediscovered by gNyag ston gZhon nu 'bum, constitutes a teaching of sTon pa Shes rab as requested by the gShen of the Five Elements. The passage under consideration reads: de las mar gshegs pa / zhang zhung sgo pa'i yul / g.yung drung mu le'i dbus / sta sgo shel gyi gang (=gangs) ri / ma phang g.yu mtsho'i khug pa / bkra shis byin du chags pa'i sar / khyung lung sprul pa'i mkhar cig brtsig / mtha' 'dul mkhar phran bco brgyad brtsig / yang 'dul gsas mkhar sum [brgya] drug bcu brtsigs / gzhi 'dul mchod rten stong dang rtsa brgyad brtsegs nas sa mnon no / she le dbal rtse / 'od gsal g.yu rtse / gsang mer lha rtse / nyi 'od shel rtse / rgyal ba bse mkhar / ya gad stag mkhar / Hab so lga mkhar / sgyug mo lan mkhar / lo tog 'gyur mkhar / drag tshan 'bram mkhar / gu ri gnam mkhar / g.yung drung yod mkhar / kha rag khyung mkhar / dpa'i brtsan seng mkhar / che brtsan dregs mkhar / mtho brtsegs rgod mkhar / ma ma dred mkhar / yar mo bshad mkhar / mkhar phran bco brgyad la / sde chen bco brgyad gnas / bon chen bco brgyad bzhugs / gsas chen bco brgyad gsol / de'i dkyil shad du / khyung lung dngul mkhar brtseg /.
10. Denotes Ti se.
11. See the transliteration of the text for the list of these 18 castles. Unfortunately the locations

360 *gsas mkhar* were built.[12] To tame the four [cardinal] directions 1008 *mchod rten* were built suppressing the earth.[13] The 18 branch castles[14] of the 18 *sde chen*[15] are inhabited by 18 Bon chen[16] and are where 18 *gsas chen*[17] are installed. In the middle of these [18 castles] the Silver Fort of Khyung valley was constructed.

The pervasive occurrence of the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology in Upper Tibet (west of 88 degrees east longitude) represents the physical legacy of a political infrastructure that may have welded the region together into a common state, Alternatively, it could also indicate a high degree of internal strife in the pre-Buddhist period, where various localities were involved in armed struggles against one another. These localized struggles could have involved clan and tribal factors as much as domination of resources. The existence of a network of pre-Buddhist fortresses in themselves does little to elucidate the nature of territorial control and political cohesion in the world in which they are

of the fortresses seem to have been lost to time. However, it would appear from the geographic orientation of the account that they were all situated in the sTod region of western Tibet.

12. *gSas mkhar* (the equivalent of *lha khang*) are the Zhang zhung period temples. They were built in various ecosystems including plains, villages, mountains, headlands and islands. See Bellezza 2001, pp. 29, 30.
13. *mChod rten* are receptacles for sacred objects, cosmological models and symbols of the enlightened form. According to the senior scholar Lopon Tenzin Namdag (in personal communication), the suppression function (*'dul ba*) discharged by the various named monuments would have had the following purposes: 1) to eliminate disturbances to the practice and propagation of Bon; 2) to directly benefit those who constructed them; and 3) to benefit the locale by protecting it from harm and by allowing it to flourish.
14. In the *Zhang zhung ju thig*, there is a tradition of nine castles belonging to nine Zhang zhung kings. Eight of these are arrayed in the compass points and are associated with pre-Buddhist classes of spirits including the *lha, klu, wer ma, sgra bla, khro po / mo, stag mo, cang seng and gnyan*. In the center is the 'Fortress of the Golden Container of Existence' (Srid pa la Gser gyi ga'u rDzong). For this reference see Dagkar 1997, pp. 693, 694. The symmetrical layout of the fortresses, and their identification with powerful indigenous spirits at the center of existence is a literary device used to convey the far reaching power and glory of the Zhang zhung kingdom. As for the possible historical implications of this *Ju thig* account it may serve to document the existence of an ancient custom of dedicating or consecrating strongholds to various classes of Zhang zhung deities.
15. *sDe chen* are residential districts the size of which are not clear. Units of 1000 (*stong sde*) and 10,000 (*khri sde*) find frequent mention in Tibetan historical literature.
16. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, Bon chen evidently refers to the chief priest of each district.
17. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, *gsas chen* (equivalent of *lha chen*) refers to the tutelary deities of the various districts. It is believed that each district had its own ruling deity, who were manifestations of various qualities of the enlightened being sTon pa. The *gsas chen* probably also had some correspondence with the local mountain divinities.

found. The nature of extraterritorial conflict is also not addressed by the ruins: did they represent a strong deterrent to attack from outside or were they erected by a population beleaguered by exterior forces? Until specific answers begin emerging for these kinds of questions we are best advised to consider that a complex interplay of factors varying over the centuries were responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the ancient castles of Upper Tibet.

Historical era incursions into Upper Tibet by various foreign powers (such as the Dogras, Mongols, and various Turkic groups) notwithstanding, there is a Bon hagiographic reference that begs us to consider that defense from external threats may also have been an important preoccupation in pre-Buddhist western Tibet. Found in *Drang don mun sel,* it illustrates the importance of taking refuge (with Vajrayana characteristics) in Bon, but in doing so it touches upon political events that seem to be portrayed in a pre-Buddhist temporal context:[18]

18. The full name of the relevant chapter is *Drang don sgron ma mun sel las gtam rgyud brda yi gzer bu*. It is found in a volume called *Drang don mun sel sgron ma*, attributed to Dran pa nam mkha' (8th century); published by Lo ru bSod nams 'Gyur med, in Chab mdo, in 1988. Excerpts of this same tale are found in Lopon Tenzin Namdag's *Bel gtam lung gi snying po*, pp. 30, 31, Paljor Publications, Delhi 1997. The transliteration reads as follows (folios 27-29): ston pa'i sgron ma ma rig mun pa sel la phyag 'tshal lo / skabs 'gro'i yon tan brjod na bsam gyis mi khyab ste / sngon pu rong gi rgyal po dang gar log sog po skyung skad kyi dmag 'thabs pa la / mi thams cad gri ru bsad / nor zas thams cad ni gar log dmag gis khyer / bud med thams cad ni kho'i yul du khyer nas / bod mig gis mi mthong / lo re bzhin du dmag dpung sdud kyin nor thams cad brlag par gtong pa la / bru sha yul gyi drang srong bde ba rgyas bya ba shig phyi'i skyabs 'gro la yi dam byed pa shig gis skyabs "gro rnam pa gsum po de / stag pa'i byang bu sor gsum po re bris kyin 'phrug pa la btags pas / gnod pa dang sams pa mi 'byung bar gyur nas mi thams cad yid ches par gyur nas / phyugs dang sgo rigs las sogs pa thams cad la yang 'dog par gyur to / de nas dus nam zhig na skyabs 'gro shin tu phan yon che bar 'dug zer ba de / pan ri ho sha bya ba la / ston pa dga' ldan bya bas skyabs 'gro phyi nang gsang ba gsum / klong du gyur ba zhig gis khums nas / ngas kyang bsad bcad mang po 'di la phan thog par srid dam snyam nas / pu rang du byon nas bzhugs yod pa la / phyi'i skyabs 'gro (= 'gros) dang mi dang mi ma yin thams cad ngag la nyan zhing 'dun par gyur nas / nang gi skyabs 'gro (= 'gros) bla ma dang yi dam mkha' 'gro rnams sprin ltar gtibs shing / dngos grub sna tshogs ster / gsang ba'i skyabs 'gro (= 'gros) rtsa rlung thig le gnas su 'drongs pas / bkug na lha mo 'od 'chang ma yang mdun du khug / bsdams na phyi nang srid pa'i rgyun yang 'thems / phyin na rgya gar yul du nyin zhag gsum gyis phyin / der bzhugs pa'i dus su gar log gi rgyal po yan pa'i dmag dpung shin tu tshan che ba byung ba la / ston pa dga' ldan zhes bya ba'i grub thob chen po des / dmag mthong nas sdig 'dzub g.yas pa phyar bas / mtshon thams cad brul zhing rta thams cad 'gyel mi thams cad smyos shing go phub thams cad rlung gis khyer / gar log gi dmag gis gnod pa ma skyel ('khyol) / bad kyis re ba skyes nas gar log gsod du chas pas / khong gi 'ching byed kyi phyag rgya khu tshur gnyis thugs kar bsnams nas / skyabs 'gro'i don dran pa las / mi thams cad rengs nas 'khum ma nus /.

Prostrations to sTon pa, the lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance. The benefits of refuge are innumerable and inconceivable. In antiquity, the king of Pu rong[19] and the Gar log Sog po[20] with the speech of the chough waged war. Many people were slaughtered. The Gar log army seized all the food, livestock and [young] women, and took them back to their country. [They] could not see their country Tibet [again]. Year after year the [Gar log] army pilfered and plundered all the wealth. A sage from the country of Bru sha named dBe ba rgyas wrote three kinds of refuge on pieces of silver birch wood three digits tall[21] and hung them on the shoulders [of the people of Pu rang]. [As a result] they did not sustain harm or injury and all the people came to depend on them. [These talismans] were also tied on yaks and other livestock, as well as other things. Then in unison it was said [by all] that this refuge was very beneficial and powerful. The one known as Pan ri Ho sha [bestowed] on him known as sTon pa dGa' ldan the three outer, inner and secret refuges,[22] which he had the chance to fully comprehend. [sTon pa dGa' ldan] thought: [with these refuges] I might possibly benefit the many being slaughtered. So he went to stay at Pu rang.[23] With the outer refuge all the people and spirits obediently listened to his commands. With the inner refuge the orders of lamas, *yi dam* and *mkha' 'gro* gathered [thickly] like clouds and bestowed various attainments [on sTon pa dGa' ldan]. With the secret refuge the channels, winds and essence were conveyed in the precise manner, invoked beautiful goddesses could be summoned before him, and he could bind the flow of internal and external existence causing their cessation. If he wanted, he could [magically] stay in India for three days and nights. While staying [at sPu rang] the Gar log king came with his very large and powerful army. sTon pa dGa' ldan, called the great adept, saw the army coming and by raising his right hand, index and small finger extended, middle and ring finger folded into the palm with his thumb, he caused all their weapons to fall to the ground and their horses to collapse. The entire [army] was rendered mad and all their shields and armor blew away. The Tibetans were now hopeful that they could slay the Gar log but he restrained them by binding their fists together over their chests. By adhering to the refuge practice all the people were immobilized and made prostrate.

19. This is an old spelling for sPu Hrang, the well known region in extreme southwestern Tibet.
20. The Gar log and Sog po denote various Turco-Mongolian groups and perhaps Indo-European linguistic groups as well.
21. These are called *byang bu*. They are strips of wood, slate, iron or copper that come in various sizes, which were used in ancient times for writing. They are still used in modern Bon rituals.
22. The Bon outer refuge is Sangs rgyas (sTon pa), Bon and *shes rab* (wisdom); the inner refuge is lama, *yi dam* (tutelary deity) and *mkha 'gro* (sky-treading female deities); and the secret refuge is *rtsa* (channels) *rlung* (winds) and *thig le* (essence droplets).
23. Spelling as in the text.

A legend found in the localized Ge sar epic cycle of Ru thog[24] also alludes to an early northern invasion of far western Tibet. Although we cannot establish a time frame for what might be nothing more than a purely fictional account, it does hint at the northwestern frontier of the Tibet plateau being vulnerable to attack in antiquity. According to the legend, Ru thog was the theater of struggle between Ge sar and the Hor (probably alludes to a Turco-Mongolian group) king, bDud lJang sa rtam. The hero Ge sar could only defeat his powerful adversary by befriending his two ministers Yul lha and bShan pa. After winning the war Ge sar rewarded bShan pa by constructing a fortress in Ru thog for him that bears his name to the present day.

In addition to fortresses and fortified settlements, it would appear that religious edifices and what might be best described as palaces or royal residences were constructed on summits. For example, the faint remains of a small palace attributed in the oral tradition to the Zhang zhung king, Lig myi rgya, are found at Dang ra Khyung rDzong (Bellezza 1997a: 386). However, these types of structures must have often been integrated into the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress complexes, making their identification extremely difficult.

(L-154; P-Ia) Name: sKyes ri Khro bo sTobs rgyal mKhar (Growth Mountain Citadel of King Wrathful Powerful). Location: gSer thur Lung, Bar tha township, Nag chu county.

This small building was built atop one of the spurs connected to the well known sacred mountain gNam ra. Locally, it is thought to have been the stronghold of Khro bo sTobs rgyal, a minister of bDud Klu btsan, the region's ruler and one of the primary villains in the Ge sar epic. Situated at approximately 5000 meters with 360 degree views, sKyes ri Khro bo sTobs rgyal mKhar has been leveled to its one meter tall revetment. Adeptly constructed of cut brown sandstone and gray limestone blocks the single structure measures 7.5 meters by four meters. Indications that sKyes ri sTobs rgyal mKhar is probably a pre-Buddhist monument include: *(1)* its epic association with the non-Buddhist ruler of the region; *(2)* the lack of a contemporary permanent water source in the valley below; *(3)* the extremely high and isolated aspect of the site; and 4) typological parallels with the Mon *mkhar* of western Byang thang (random rubble walls, probable all-stone construction and diminutive size of the carcass).

(L-155; P-Ib; P-Ic) Name: gSham gdong Brag dkar (Basal Hole White Formation) and sGog pa Brag (Garlic Formation). Location: mTshams khang Lung pa in Ri rgod, Bar tha township, Nag chu county.

gSham gdong Brag dkar, named after a fissure leading from the base to the top of the formation, appears to be one of at least two sites that form the nuclei of early settlement in Ri rgod (Wild Mountain). The ruin located at Brag dkar consists of the residuum of a revetment encircling the top of the formation, which measures 7.5 meters by 3.5 meters. Below the hilltop remains is the lamaist cave retreat gSham gdong sGrub phug. Further up the valley is sGog pa Brag and what appears to be another

24. This Ge sar tale was shared with me in personal communication by Korpon Lobsang Khenrab, a researcher of Ru thog's history residing in India.

archaic site. This is comprised of a highly disintegrated foundation wall set along the edge of a ledge in the cliff face extending for a distance of 21 meters. The area enclosed by the wall averages about 4.5 meters in width. The remains at sGog ra appear to be the vestiges of a cliff dwelling. There is little by which to estimate the age of the ruins at gSham gdong Brag dkar and sGog pa Brag, but their defensible position in the crags and oral accounts that speak of great antiquity suggest that these may represent pre-Buddhist monuments.

In addition to gSham gdong Brag dkar and sGog pa Brag, there are two other sets of ruins in the valley bottom of mTshams khang lung pa, one of which has significant elevations. These appear to be the remains of historical era retreats. Local accounts do not differentiate between the various sites in the mTshams khang lung pa in terms of function or chronology. Quite ambiguously, these accounts of the identity of the monuments revolve around three major themes: *(1)* dwellings of personages connected to the Ge sar epic; *(2)* Buddhist meditation centers; and *(3)* military outposts of the Mongols of the 13th century and the Dzungars of the 18th century.

In the oral accounts of Bar tha (also spelled: Bar rta) Ri rgod is best known for its Jing ger sDod sa (Residence of Genghis Khan), situated on the right side of the upper Ri rgod valley. While the prevalent tale of Genghis Khan visiting Bar tha is apocryphal, it is clear from the oral histories that the Mongols of the 13th century encamped here. The traditional rulers of Bar tha are said to belong to the clan of Genghis Khan (Jing ger clan); the present member of the lineage Kun dga', 25th in number, is around 40 years of age. Another clan, the Dung rwa ba of Ri rgod, provided a hereditary line of Bar tha ministers called Jing ger Blon po. According to senior members of the Dung rwa ba clan, the status of these two clans was enhanced by their close association with the 'Bri gung pa hierarchs such as 'Bri gung skyob pa 'Jigs rten gsum gyi mgon po (1143-1217). Members of the Dung rwa ba clan served as patrons for 'Jigs rten gsum mgon and ten of his disciples. They are said to have taken up residence at Ri rgod in a cave called Glang mo phug.[25] It would seem, therefore, that Jing ger sDod sa was a Mongol outpost built with local assistance and perpetuated through intermarriage with local clans. The Jing ger sDod sa is found in the valley bottom and is divided into north and south sections by a gully. The south section consists of the footings of three houses; the largest (nine meters by nine meters) and most northerly of which is thought to have been the residence of Genghis Khan. The north section of the Jing ger sDod sa is comprised of various types of corrals extending for 50 meters in length said to have

25. A biography of the 'Bri gung pa corroborates local oral tradition. In it references are made to its 12th and 13th century lamas being active in the gNam ra, gNyan chen thang lha and 'Dam regions. For example, 'Bri gung skyob pa 'Jigs ten gsum gyi mGon po Rin chen dpal is recorded as coming to gNam ra from gNyan chen thang lha to subdue the mountain deity and bring it and other beings into the Buddhist fold. See *'Bri gung skyob pa rin chen dpal gyi rnam thar*, p. 78. This *rnam thar* is part of *'Bri gung gdan rangs gser 'phreng*, pp. 62-104. It was published by Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, Lhasa, in 1989.

belonged to the Khan. It is comprised of three areas: lower-extensive wall footings; middle-crumbling adobe walls up to one meter in height; and upper-skillfully constructed pen.

At Jing ger sDod sa there is a half spherical-shaped boulder measuring 65 centimeters *across*, which is called gNam thel Bla rdo, the soul stone of gNam thel dkar po, the ancestral spirit of Genghis Khan and the Dung rwa clan. Until the Communist period it was enshrined in a *rten mkhar* located above Jing ger sDod sa. At the head of the Ri rgod valley is the mountain known as Ri rgod Me 'bar, which is said to have been the *rgyab ri* (supporting mountain) of Genghis Khan.

As we have seen, Ri rgod has been the cultural nexus of Bar tha for at least 700 years. However, the two verdant valleys that make up this locale were probably chosen by the Mongols because of the presence of an antecedent settlement. Their occupation of Ri rgod seems best explained by a need to replace a preexisting political power base. Certainly the variety of archaeological sites and the well endowed geographic position of the twin valleys of Ri rgod (including good fodder, water, natural shelters and the presence of ample building materials) suggest that it has been the main cultural center of Bar tha far back into antiquity. Ri rgod, nestled in the gNam ra range, starkly contrasts with the Communist seat of power in Bar tha, which is situated in a bleak, windswept plain.

(L-156; P-Id) Name: Bis rdza dMag 'thab sa (Bis rdza Mon Fighting Place). Location: summit of Bis rdza, sTong mTsho township, sGer rtse county.

On top of a mountain called Bis rdza (elevation 5800 meters) are obscure minor ruins that some local sources say may have been a Mon stronghold. Traces of two foundations and walls up to one meter in height can be discerned in the rocky terrain of the summit. Bis rdza, the highest site to date surveyed by the author, enjoys encompassing views in all directions. With so little physical evidence remaining and the ambiguity surrounding oral accounts, an independent assessment of the site is not possible.

(L-157; P-Ie) Name: Mon mkhar Ser nag (Yellow Black Mon Castle). Location: Ka ser nag valley, Tshwa kha township, dGe rgyas county.

This ancient stronghold identified with the Mon is situated on top of a rocky mount that straddles the mouth of the Ka ser nag valley, 30 kilometers west of the Tshwa kha township headquarters. This location is now devoid of permanent settlement. Rising about 150 meters above a bifurcation in the valley, Mon mkhar Ser nag, with its small multiple structures built in tiers on crags, is constructed in the pre-Buddhist fortress style. Reduced to disparate remnants, little can be gleaned about the plan of Mon mkhar Ser nag, but morphological parallels with other citadels of this typology suggest that it was constructed with all-stone roofs. On the very summit (approximately 4650 meters elevation), highly fragmentary wall footings blanket an area measuring 30 meters (north to south) by three to six meters (east to west). A retaining wall appears to have ringed the summit and in places against cliff faces it is still two meters in height. There are no prayer flags or *mani* stones on the summit as the place is either ignored or disdained by adherents of the lamaist religions, according to local reports. On the east flank of the

hillside, on a ledge (more than 30 meters in length and several meters in width) and spur, are quite extensive remains of disintegrated foundation walls. Below the south side of the summit what survives of a curtainwall stretches along the ridgeback for 70 meters. Although much of it has been leveled, certain sections attain one meter to 1.5 meters in height. At the foot of the north side of the hill are minor ruins including a wall five meters in length barely protruding from the ground.

Downstream or north of the castle, at the right edge of the Kha ser nag valley, are two Mon *ra* (enclosures), one of which is aligned in the cardinal directions and has uniformly built footings that must have supported the superstructure of an edifice of some type. Remaining walls are up to one meter in height, creating a structure that measures six meters (east to west) by 14 meters (north to south). A few meters to the southwest is another Mon *ra* measuring 13 meters across. In section, its irregular wall footings are between 60 centimeters and two meters wide. North of these two structures, and extending for hundreds of meters, is an area that is thought to have been cultivated in ancient times by the Mon. Remnants of a wall along the west side of this sector are visible. The presence of a perennial stream, the gradient and geomorphology of the terrain, its sheltered aspect and relatively low elevation (4500 meters), as well as the existence of formerly arable land to the east in analogous ecological niches at Zhing chen and Na ma lung, support local claims that this once was an agricultural enclave.

(L-158; P-If) Name: sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog (Ruined Habitations of Marshy Red Pasture). Location: sPang dmar gZhung, dGe rgyas county, rGod tshang smad township.

This sizable ancient site (also called mGar.chumkhar) covers a hilltop located in the extensive pasture-land that has formed near the confluence of the Indus (Seng ge gTsang po) and Khri tsho gTsang po (spelling?). It is thought by local sources to have been a Mon habitation. Although no local information on the age and function of this site was forthcoming, its location on a highly defensible hilltop suggests that it was a fortification and / or a religious center of some type. sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog can be divided into discrete east and west complexes. The Khang gog east complex consists of a compact mass of ruins that sits on a summit rising some 60 meters to 80 meters above the surrounding pasture (4540 meters elevation). The walls of the carcasses appear to have been painted with red ochre that still contrast with the light color of the limestone hill. The random coursed rubble walls were cemented using a reddish mud mortar that has leached out and also stained the limestone blocks red. The very summit of the site contains a conterminous group of almost leveled walls built at three elevations covering an area that measures a maximum of 15 meters by 15 meters. The remains of a rampart clinging to the formation below the summit is upwards of four meters in height. The middle level of the east complex consists of several small structures extending for a distance of about 24 meters (north to south) on the east side of the hill. The lower level of the east complex of sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog is dominated by a 14 meter long dual-chambered cave. It has entrances on both the east and west side of the hill, which reveal masonry work probably belonging to the old facades that enclosed the cave.

The larger west complex of sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog is located on a lower summit of the same hill. From a visual survey it is entirely unclear whether the west and east complexes shared a chronological and cultural unity to form an integrated facility. With one exception, the extensive group of structures that stood here have all been reduced to their foundations. Even the bases of walls that partitioned the various structures have been obliterated, so consequently nothing can be affirmed about its original ground plan. Contiguous structures of the west complex blanketed an area measuring 75 meters (east to west) by a maximum of 19 meters (north to south). The encircling rampart built against the summit is up to two meters tall. At one time, this ostensible defensive feature must have stood well above the summit. The only walled structure remaining on the summit measures four meters by four meters and up to 1.5 meters in height. Inside it are remnants of partitioning walls. As it is the only standing structure with a prominent elevation at the west complex, it is probably not contemporaneous with the rest of the ruins. There also appears to be structural detritus on the flanks of the hill making up the west complex of sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog, as well as a high volume spring at the foot of the hill. The ample supply of excellent quality water and pasturage must, at least in part, explain the siting of the monument.

(L-159; P-Ig) Name: Sha ro Mon dur (Rotten Meat Mon Graves?) Location: mountain top above sPang dmar gZhung, dGe rgyas county.

This is another large archaeological site overlooking the confluence of the Indus and Khri tsho rivers that is thought to have been inhabited by the Mon. There are no *mani* stones or any other Buddhist accouterments at the site, which supports the local claim that Sha ro Mon dur is a pre-Buddhist monument. The presence of large buildings at sPang dmar gZhung, such as Sha ri Mon dur, demonstrates that this locale was an important ancient center of habitation. However, the mountainous areas have been completely abandoned; in the contemporary period; permanent settlement is only found in the valley bottoms. Purposefully built in an unassailable location with commanding views of the two big rivers and luxuriant meadows below, it would appear that Sha ri Mon dur was a hub of the religious and / or political elite inhabiting the region. However, the lack of revetments, ramparts, curtainwalls and other defensive architectural features indicates that it was not designed as a fortress.

Sha ri Mon dur, occupying a high amphitheater at 4700 meters, boasts a fairly dense agglomeration of ruined structures that cloak an area measuring 135 meters (north to south) by a maximum of 70 meters (east to west). There are also some outlying ruins. The ruins are comprised of substantial limestone foundations and scattered wall segments up to 1.5 meters in height and one meter in thickness. Inside some of the structures there is evidence of significant excavation that seems to have occurred well in the past (as evidenced by current soil and vegetation conditions). This seems to hint at the widespread looting of the site. As the remains are in an advanced state of disintegration little can be stated about the ground plan and character of what was obviously a large monumental presence. Most of the structures are quadrangular in shape and appear to be the footings of buildings. However, some of the ruins appear circular in shape and resemble the Mon *dur* typology. The occurrence of this latter typology explains the current name of the site. One of the largest structures is found

on the north side of the Sha ri Mon dur site; its foundations and crumbling walls cover an area that measures 15 meters by eight meters.

(L-160; P-Ih) Name: sKabs ren Gyang gog (Ruins of sKabs ren). Location: sKabs ren valley, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

Located up valley from sKabs ren village at an elevation of 4700 meters, this monument is said to have been built by the Mon and is simply referred to as Mon *rdo* (stones). In the vicinity of the contemporary village of sKabs ren (elevation 4500 meters), agriculture is said to have been conducted by the Mon pa, illustrating the economic importance of this valley in ancient times. However, at the present time, there is very minimal cultivation at sKabs ren village. The desolate middle reaches of the sKabs ren valley (elevation 4400 to 4700 meters) are an excellent source of *'om bu* (tamarisk), the largest of which has a maximum basal girth of 1.2 meters. This sacred tree, marked with prayer flags, is thought to be the mother of all tamarisks in the local riparian shrub forest.

There are both hilltop and basal ruins located at sKabs ren. The main summit structure, situated approximately 140 meters above the valley floor, measures nine meters by three meters. The elevation of the walls is a maximum of 2.2 meters, and in section they are 65 centimeters to 95 centimeters. The 50 centimeter wide entranceway to this two-tiered structure (consisting of a vestibule and parapet) is in the west, the side overlooking the valley. Below the stonework of the lintel there are three rounds of tamarisk integrated into its construction. Spanning the jambs, these 20 centimeter in circumference pieces of wood could hold important clues to the age of the structure. Just below the summit are minor structural remains, including a rampart-like structure 24 meters in length containing small intact wall segments a maximum of one meter in height. The lofty aspect and broad views of the sKabs ren valley enjoyed by the hilltop ruins are characteristic of elite architecture in the form of a temple, fortress or palace.

The lower complex at sKabs ren Gyang gog sits at the foot of a large rock face. It consists of the foundations of what appear to have been four rooms. The two more intact central foundations measure 9.5 meters in length by 2.5 to three meters in width. The outer footing of these two foundations is upwards of 1.4 meters in height and on the interior it is elevated 50 centimeters above the ground level.

(L-161; P-Ii) Name: 'Tsher lung mKhar nag. Location: west side of the mouth of the 'Tsher lung valley, Khul pa township, Ru thog.

The fort is named for the dark metamorphic stones used in the construction of its walls. 'Tsher lung mKhar nag is one of three large hilltop sites in the general vicinity connected with the ancient Mon. The wide summit rises about 25 meters above the valley floor, and at its base are high volume springs. On the one hundred meter long eponymous summit there is a tight agglomeration of foundations and ruined walls. The hilltop is encircled by the remains of a rampart that approximately measures one meter in height and one meter in width. Overlooking both the Khul pa and 'Tsher lung valleys, the ruins found here most resemble what may have been a fortified settlement. The area is endowed with springs, excellent pastures, the perennial Khul pa river and extensive agricultural lands. However, these arable lands situated in the mouth of the

'Tsher lung valley, are now only marginally exploited for barley cultivation. It would appear that the volume of the 'Tsher lung chu, from whence irrigation water is drawn, is only sufficient for a small portion of what was once farmed. On the opposite or north side of the Khul pa valley from 'Tsher lung mKhar nag, the pre-Buddhist necropolis of Ri Ra ser Mon dur[26] is visible. The chronological relationship between the two monuments is unclear. Nevertheless, it is possible that they represent parallel domiciliary and funerary sites of the ruling segment of the same Zhang zhung-Mon population.

On the basis of the characteristic elevations, I have divided the ruins of 'Tsher lung mKhar nag into East, Central and West sectors. The East sector is around 15 meters wide and 29 meters long, and contains loosely arrayed, highly disintegrated wall footings. The Central sector is around 24 meters wide and 43 meters long, and is separated from the East sector by two 1.5 meter high wall segments. The Central sector contains a dense array of foundations and fragmentary walls. The structures that once stood here appear to have been divided into many small rooms. The largest single structure at 'Tsher lung mKhar nag is located at the west end of the Central sector and measures 5.6 meters by six meters. The top of its four meter tall walls are made from adobe blocks. The lower three meters of this edifice appear to be solid. Fractional wall units extend from both the east and west sides of this structure. The West sector measures approximately 28 meters by 28 meters. It contains a thick concentration of footings and a few small wall segments. Some of its foundations were used to construct *lhas ra* (corrals), which are now disused.

(L-162; P-Ij) Name: Brag phug. Location: east side of the mouth of the 'Tsher lung valley, Khul pa township, Ru thog county.

Attributed to the Mon, the three ridge-top complexes of Brag phug form a second impressive archaeological monument located at 'Tsher lung that is said to have functioned as a fortress. The presence of major ruins in the vicinity can be related to the optimal environmental conditions found here. Rich pastures and arable land both endow the 4400 meter elevation mouth of the 'Tsher lung valley with highly important resources. During the 1960s much of this land was brought back into cultivation, but since that time agriculture has been radically scaled back, due to what appears to be a perennial shortage of water. The rich pre-Buddhist archaeological record of Ru thog county represented in sites such as Brag phug is seen by local residents as evidence of a much more populous past. According to oral tradition, in ancient times, Ru thog had a population of 100,000, and the region was large and well developed.[27] Then one day an epidemic came, wiping out nearly the entire population. Slowly, over the course of many generations, the population partially rebounded to several thousand, where it stood in the pre-Communist period.

I have divided the three complexes of Brag phug into obvious geographic units: Lower, Middle and Upper. The Lower complex is situated on the spur tip of the ridge of

26. See Bellezza 2000a, p. 41, 42; 2001, p 156.
27. This common Ru thog oral tradition was shared (in personal communication) by Korpon Lobsang Khenrab and his elderly parents, natives of the region who now reside in India.

the same name. The main structure here measures 14 meters by 4.5 meters with walls up to three meters in height still clinging to the formation. Below this ruin, on the east side of the formation, there is minor structural detritus. In addition to these ruins others on the spur tip have been converted into now disused livestock pens. The Middle complex is situated on a higher or more southerly summit of the same ridge. Ruins blanket the entire 54 meter by 27 meter large summit and spill down both its east and west flanks. This conterminous group of buildings is now reduced to fragmentary footings and walls. The most intact structure measures six meters by nine meters and still has walls reaching three meters in height. These walls are about 65 centimeters thick and contain the residue of the beige clay, high-stone matrix mortar used to cement the random course masonry. Located on a higher summit, the Upper complex of Brag phug (elevation 4500 meters) appears to have been comprised of a large single building measuring 12 meters by 20 meters. Exterior walls up to 3.5 meters in height and several interior wall partitions have survived. There are several adobe wall sections in the Upper complex. About 12 meters below the summit ruin the remains of a rampart, approximately 200 meters in length, encircle the hilltop. This defensive feature, where still intact, is 1.5 meters to two meters in height and 80 centimeters to one meter thick. The rampart encloses a largely level gallery or walkway two to three meters in width. There appears to be the remnants of gateways on the south and northeast sides of the rampart.

(L-163; P-Ik) Name: rTsa ma. Location: mouth of the rTsa ma valley, Khul pa township, Ru thog county. The ruins located here on a ridge-top flanking the west side of the rTsa ma valley are thought by local residents to have been built by the ancient Mon. The upper end of the site, at 4470 meters, is located about 80 meters above the valley floor. Nearly all the foundations, as well as many wall sections, are still intact at rTsa ma. Together with the proximate installations at 'Tsher lung, the ruins of rTsa ma constitute the nucleus of an ancient settlement in Khul pa. Like 'Tsher lung, rTsa ma is endowed with excellent hydrological resources that could have supported a fairly extensive agricultural base, in addition to stock-rearing. The absence of defensive features and outworks at rTsa ma indicates that the facility located here was not a fortress but rather an alternative type of elite structure.

The axial plan of rTsa ma can be divided into a lower complex, consisting of a single line of structures, and the upper complex, which has two parallel rows of structures separated from one another by a passageway. The upper complex measures 39 meters in length and is about 10 meters in width. On the south side of the passage there are the remains of nine rooms and on the north side there are ten contiguous ruined rooms. The individual rooms tend to be small with typical dimensions of 2.5 to three meters by three to five meters. Wall segments attain two meters in height and in one room there is a possible roof corbel *in situ* made of the same dark-colored stone of the walls. The passageway between the two rows of structures of the upper complex is 95 centimeters to 1.5 meters in width. The Lower complex is 55 meters in length and consists of a single line of 12 or 13 rooms. These rooms are of the same size as those in the upper complex.

(L-164; P-Il) Name: sMig pa mKhar ru (Lizard Fortress Division). Location: Glog

phug mTsho, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

This site is situated on a small island located about 50 meters from the north shore of Glog phug mTsho far removed from modern habitation. Depending on the lake level one must negotiate water between one and two meters in depth in order to reach the islet. The site of what is believed to have been a Mon fortress possesses geomantic qualities favored by the pre-Buddhists: it has a southern aspect and sits in the middle of the lake-shore overlooking a large body of water. The relative position of the site compares with pre-Buddhist locations on the north shore of gNam mTsho or Da rog mTsho, for example. The highly disintegrated ruins of sMig pa mKhar ru can be divided into North and South summits separated from one another by a large gap in the rocky backbone of the island. The South summit complex blankets an area measuring 70 meters by 11 meters. Not one intact wall segment can be found among the dissolving footings. The North summit contains small wall fragments and wall footings covering an area that measures 15 meters by four meters.

(L-165; P-Im) Name: Me long Mon mKhar (Mirror Mon Citadel). Location: rear of the Me long valley, rTsa phug township, Ru thog county. This extensive site is named after the valley, which is round in shape like a Tibetan mirror. Associated with the ancient bsKal Mon,[28] Me long Mon mKhar was probably one of the major pre-Buddhist Zhang zhung-Mon strongholds in far western Tibet. It sits a few kilometers west of the cave complex of Khyung tshang, a famous *gnas chen* (sacred site) in Ru thog county, in the same range of mountains. Me long Mon mKhar is hidden in the extreme rear of the deserted Me long valley beside two streams that disappear underground before they reach the main part of the valley. The presence of a perennial water source in this arid northwest corner of the Tibetan plateau must have been an important factor in placing the monument in such a remote location. Unlike the fortresses occupying strategic locations above the confluence of rivers, or near important pastures and farming areas, Me long Mon mkhar stands in isolation to obvious geographic reference points. Its location at the very head of a branch valley (an affluent of the rTsa phug valley) is more in keeping with a common orientation for monasteries or temples. Consequently, the ruins found here may represent those of a fortified religious settlement.

Me long Mon mKhar can be divided according to location into West and East formations, two limestone mounts separated by a stream. The higher West formation hosts several groups of ruins on its 4800 meter tall summit. The remnants of a stone buttressed trail lead up a cliff face to a structure measuring nine meters by 13 meters with walls up to two meters in height. Other smaller ruins are found on the north flank of the summit and on a higher summit. On the south side of the summit obscured wall footings cover an area that measures 13 meters by 14 meters. West of these ruins, on a high saddle connecting two peaks, is a wall two meters high and three meters thick that stretches for 30 meters. On the opposite side of a ravine are two caves with the remains of facades built around their mouths. Another enclosed cave is found near the

28. This name is a means of differentiating between the ancient and modern Mon populations that is sometimes used in western Tibet.

base of the north side of the West formation, and other minor remains are near the base of the east side of the formation overlooking the local watercourse.

The more extensive ruins of the East formation of Me long Mon mKhar can be divided into Lower, West Summit, East Summit and West complexes reflecting their relative locations. The Lower complex contains the remains of large buildings covering an area that measures 20 meters by 30 meters. Massive walls up to two meters in height and 70 centimeters in thickness still stand. In places, remnants of mud plaster cling to the walls. The West Summit complex is comprised of contiguous structures occupying four or five tiers along a 30 meter transection. Very little of the buildings is detectable in the rubble pouring down the steep slopes. The East Summit complex is connected to the West Summit and Lower complexes by the vestiges of a stone lined trail clinging to the near vertical formation. The dislodged foundations of the East Summit complex cloak an area measuring ten meters by 16 meters. The West complex of the East formation at Me long Mon mKhar has been reduced to wall segments perched above the watercourse.

(L-166; P-In) Name: sDings leb sNgon po (Blue Level Eminence). Location: rTsa phug township, Ru thog county.

The monuments located here are supposed to be those of a Buddhist monastery and a Mon settlement. The contrasting states of preservation of the ruins may point to different time periods and explain the variable oral history attached to the site. What is clear is that sDings leb sNgon po occupies a strategic location overlooking the regionally important oasis of rTsa phug. On the summit of the limestone ridge (elevation 4430 meters) there is a carcass with parts of all four walls intact, that measures eight meters by 10.5 meters with a maximum height of two meters. The ochre tinted walls above the 75 centimeter to one meter high random rubble foundation are composed of adobe blocks. There are at least two major wall partitions inside the structure. Southeast of this structure are disbursed foundations over a distance of 16 meters, and to the north of it are other highly disintegrated foundations. On two locations below the summit are areas with wall footings measuring five meters by 4.5 meters and 12.5 meters by 6.5 meters. In the middle of this latter group of foundations, adobe blocks top the 90 centimeter high walls.

(L-167; P-Io) Name: Chu mKhar gyam (Water Castle Rock Shelter). Location: rDo dmar township, Ru thog county.

Associated with the ancient Mon, Chu mKhar gyam, at least in its earliest phase, may have been another member of the extensive network of Zhang zhung-Mon cultural strongholds found throughout western Tibet. The site is situated on the summit of a limestone dome (maximum elevation 4570 meters) overlooking the upper rDo dmar Chu valley. Chu mKhar gyam occupies a strategically important location on a formation overlooking the confluence of the rDo dmar chu and the valley leading south to Ru thog. The area is also blessed with marshy pastures and high volume springs that must have played a decisive role in its establishment. However, in the contemporary period there are no permanent *'brog pa* settlements in the vicinity.

A rampart seems to have encircled the entire summit of Chu mKhar gyam and is most intact on the northeast side of the site, while only vestiges of this structure are still found on the south rim of the summit. The maximum height of this hundreds of meters long wall is between 1.5 meters and 2.5 meters. The remains of what may have been sentinel posts are found along the north side of the rampart. On the northwest extremity of Chu mKhar gyam there is a foundation with protruding stones resembling the Mon *dur / ra* typology that measures no less than nine meters by 4.5 meters, with a possible extension in the east. Eighteen meters to the south are foundations, among which are at least four Mon *dur*-like structures. Also on the east side of the site are several building sites, the largest of which measures 20 meters in length. A little west of these are the remains of an edifice covering around 200 square meters. This structure contained at least seven or eight large rooms and is best preserved on its west side, where ochre colored wall segments still attain 2.5 meters in height. Like other edifices at Chu mKhar gyam, it was constructed from locally quarried limestone.

Approximately 100 meters further east, at nearly 4600 meters, is the highest elevation structure at Chu mKhar gyam. This complex, measuring 20 meters by five meters, was divided into several rooms or buildings. On both its north and south sides the remains of breastworks extend down the steep sides of the formation. The most extensive defensive wall is found on the south side of the summit complex and is approximately 34 meters in length, and upwards of 1.5 meters in height and one meter thick. Integrated into it are several foundations of what were probably small buildings. Below the nine meter long north breastwork there is a foundation that measures ten meters by 1.5 to three meters. A buttressed trail running along the south side of the summit connected the various installations of Chu mKhar gyam.

(L-168; P-Ip) Name: Ping Ser po Mon mKhar. Location: ridge-top on the right side of the sGar valley, sGar county.

This site of what is supposed to have been a Mon castle is situated on a subsidiary peak of a yellowish-colored mountain with sweeping views of the sGar valley. The wide sGar valley is both an important pastoral and agricultural region in far western Tibet. Set between the Gangs dkar and A yi la ranges at the relatively low elevation of 4300 meters, the sGar valley offers one of the most hospitable environments in mNga' ris. The presence of a number of ancient monuments on the high ground surrounding the valley attributed to the Mon, such as Ping Ser po Mon mKhar, indicates that the region has long been a center of settlement and sedentary culture. In the late 17th century, after conquering all the principalities in western Tibet, dGa' ldan Tshe dbang established the military headquarters of mNga' ris in the bottom of the sGar valley.[29] In contrast, local sites attributed to the Mon are found in much higher and more defensible locations.

Rising approximately 170 meters above the valley floor are the remains of the summit complex (elevation 4500 meters) of Ping Ser po Mon mKhar, which measures 24 meters (north to south) by 4.5 to seven meters (east to west). There is also a subsidiary summit complex measuring ten meters by 4.5 meters. These complexes are cloaked in granite rubble and small foundation segments. While there are no free-standing walls, the

29. For the establishment of mNga' ris skor gsum see bsTan 'dzin dbang grags 1996, pp. 57-66.

rampart encircling the summit reaches two meters in height on its south side. What may have been granite roof beams, one meter in length, are strewn across the summit. Rooms of the summit complexes appear to have been small; 2.5 meters by three meters or somewhat larger. Below the summit, on a west facing spur (side that faces the sGar valley), are three small groups of ruins. Located seven meters below the summit is the most intact structure at Ping Ser po, which has parts of all four walls standing. This building measures eight meters by 4.5 meters with walls upwards of 1.8 meters in height. Further down the spur is a structure measuring 7.5 meters by five meters with wall segments to 1.5 meters in height. In the vicinity is another far less well preserved structure covering an area that measures 11 meters by three to five meters.

(L-169; P-lq; P-lr) Name: mChong gog Mon mKhar. Location: above confluence of the Thar lcang and sGar valleys, Thar lcang township, sGar county.

This monument stands directly above the large Thar lcang flood plain and enjoys commanding views of the broad sGar valley. It is reported to be a Mon castle although, like so many other places, there seem to be no historical details preserved in the oral accounts. However, the presence of extensive adobe structures at the site may indicate that the facility situated here actually belongs to the historical or Buddhist period. Although the buildings of mChong gog Mon mKhar were circumvallated by a large wall, the site is flanked on one side by higher ground and therefore, is not particularly defensible. Consequently, it is more likely to have been a fortified settlement or religious center rather than specifically a military fortress.

In the contemporary settlement of Thar lcang agriculture is still practiced albeit to a much smaller extent than in times gone by. Even during the Communist Collectivization period, when intensive farming was reintroduced in Thar lcang, only a small fraction of what are reported to have been Mon agricultural lands were brought back into cultivation. In the late 1970s, most of the agricultural lands were again abandoned, but there is now a push among local residents (with government assistance) to expand the area under cultivation. This is not an easy task for in the summer of 1999, floods devastated barley fields along the margins of the Thar lcang flood plain. As in other areas of mNga' ris, agriculture at Thar lcang is said to have originated with the Mon of antiquity. Abandoned Mon fields, walls (*zhing ra*), terraces and irrigation works are found at the edge of the sGar valley in a locality known as mChod rten rKang gnyis and in various hollows in the hills and piedmont above Thar lcang. According to local sources, in the upper Thar lcang valley there are two reservoirs (*rdzing*): a ruined one constructed by the Mon and one built in the 1960s. More salutary environmental conditions in the past are suggested by poplars that are reported to have thrived in the upper Thar lcang valley. The name of the locality is said to have been derived from these poplars (*lcang ma*), which no longer exist in the upper valley.

The remains of a large adobe rampart, approximately 240 meters in length, encircles the hilltop (elevation 4420 meters) at mChong gog Mon mKhar. While much of this stone-reinforced wall has disintegrated and has been reabsorbed into the ground, there is a four meter long segment on the north side of the hill, which is four meters high and 1.2 meters thick. Within the ramparts there are small fragmentary stone wall footings. However, the visual evidence points to there having been a sparse collection of structures. The largest single structure is situated on the very summit of the broad hilltop, and is comprised of stone and adobe wall fragments encompassing an area that measures 15 meters by 13.5 meters. Below the large adobe wall encircling the north and east slopes are the remains of a 1.8 meters thick stone wall that is now less than one meter in height. It is not clear if this was an outwork of some kind or an irrigation structure. On the south and west sides of the complex bluffs plunge into the Thar lcang flood plain. The remnants of ancient irrigation structures and walled plots are visible in close proximity to mChong gog Mon mKhar.

(L-170; P-ls) Name: Ma lung mKhar. Location: Thar lcang township, sGar county.

Situated at approximately 4700 meters, on a bench overlooking the right side of the Thar lcang gTsang po, is another ruin locally attributed to the ancient Mon. This remote site is poised above where the Thar lcang gTsang po disgorges from the A yi la range. Although it commands excellent views of much of the surrounding terrain, this facility would have been vulnerable to attack from above. As such, the local name of the site may be misleading. The morphology and size of the monument is most consonant with a (fortified) hermitage.

Ma lung mKhar consists of a single structure that measures five meters by 12 meters. Its 65 centimeters to one meter thick walls are up to two meters in height and were built to withstand the fierce elements of this highly exposed location. Extending down the steep hill side from the structure are the remains of a breastwork-like wall 14 meters in length.

(L-171; P-lt) Name: Ar gog mKhar ru. Location: Byi'u Gangs ra dKar po Chu valley, dGun sa township, sGar county.

Overlooking a defile that the Byi'u Gangs ra dKar po river flows through, Ar gog mKhar ru, at 4650 meters, is situated nearly 400 meters higher than the sGar valley. It reposes on top of an outcrop that has sweeping views of the piedmont and sGar valley below. The nearest modern habitations are situated in the sGar valley. No information on the identity of Ar gog mKhar ru could be obtained locally, but on the basis of its location and style of construction (random rubble dry masonry walls, small structures) it has the earmarks of a Zhang zhung-Mon fortress.

The rubble-covered summit measures 57 meters (north to south) by a maximum of 10 meters (east to west). The south half of the summit is narrower and structures located here have been reduced to their foundations. The north half of the summit has more extensive ruins, with wall sections reaching 1.5 meters in height, but not enough is visible to assess the ground plan. It would, however, appear that the buildings of Ar gog mKhar ru formed a conterminous complex. On the east flanks of the steep hillside are other highly dissolute ruins. Below the east side of the hill that the ruins sit on there are the remains of a number of walled terraces.

(L-172; P-lu) Name: Khyung lung dNgul mKhar (Eagle Valley Silver Fortress). Location: Gu ru Gyam, Mon 'tsher township, sGar county. The ruins of what is purportedly the most renowned location in the erstwhile kingdom of Zhang zhung are located on a mesa-like hilltop situated east of the Bon Gu ru Gyam monastery. Located on a long

hilltop called mKhar gdong (Fortress Face) in the vernacular, or more elaborately Zhang zhung Khyung chen Spungs pa'i ri (Great Eagle Heaped Mountain of Zhang zhung),[30] is what has been identified by certain Bon scholars as the ruins of Khyung lung dNgul mkhar (bsTan 'dzin dBang grags: 310). According to the well known lama bsTan 'dzin dBang grags, aged 79, and the nun gSang chen, aged 75 (in personal communication), the identification of the site was made more than 60 years ago by their teacher the Bon lama Khyung sprul 'Jigs med Nam mkha' rDo rje (died 1956), who was based in western Tibet for some 30 years.[31] These sources tell the following story regarding the identification of Khyung lung dNgul mKhar, the capital of Zhang zhung: for centuries the site laid forgotten until Khyung sprul Rin po che found the self-formed stone statue of the Bon saint Dran pa Nam mkha' buried in the ground at mKhar gdong, heralding this site to be Khyung lung dNgul mKhar. With the help of several people he managed to recover the statue, that had been desecrated during the prosecution of the Bon religion in the late 8th century CE, and restore it. This stone image, which was again damaged in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, is called Kha rag rDo sku rang byon and is enshrined in a small temple at mKhar gdong.

The identification of the fabled Khyung lung dNgul mkhar with mKhar gdong is in contradiction to the attribution made by G. Tucci in the 1930s, and subsequently by certain other scholars.[32] According to Tucci, the Zhang zhung capital of Khyung lung dNgul mkhar should be identified with ruins found in the vicinity of the village of Khyung lung, located some 10 kilometers downstream of Gu ru gyam.[33] It is indisputable that the village of Khyung lung hosts extensive pre-Buddhist sites in the way of hundreds of rock shelters and minor elevations associated with a Zhang zhung fortress, as well as the ruins of a historical era monastery and castle. The plain truth is we may never positively know which specific carcass, the one near Gu ru gyam or one in Khyung lung, is actually the Khyung lung dNgul mkhar described in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and Bon literary sources. Insistence on a specific attribution for dNgul mkhar may however, be obscuring a more important historical and archaeological matter: the concentration of pre-Buddhist settlements in the stretch of the Glang chen gTsang po between sPre ta pu ri and mDa' pa, as indicated by the reported high occurrence of ancient building sites. In fact, Lopon Tenzin Namdag, on the basis of Bon literary accounts, states (in personal communication) that Khyung lung does not merely refer to a single eponymous village but to the stretch of the Glang chen gTsang po delineated above. Let us now turn to some of the most important Bon sources describing Khyung lung in order to elucidate its geographic identity, and to explicate paleoenvironmental factors and the mythology surrounding this crucial pre-Buddhist site and its cultural sedentarism.

In the 13th century Bon text *Kun 'bum*, an elaborate description of the fortress of Khyung lung dNgul mkhar is provided (see pp. 27, 28 for a translation and discussion of the first part of this reference, as well as bibliographic data). In this ritualistic account the Khyung lung castle is described as being an *axis mundi* penetrating and dominating the three planes of existence (*srid gsum*), in the manner of prose found in invocational (*gsol kha*) texts devoted to important mountain deities (*yul lha* and *gzhi bdag*). Similarly, the fourfold division of the castle made of precious substances in the *Kun 'bum* account is also a common poetical device in *gsol kha* texts used to describe sacred mountains:[34]

> [Khyung lung dNgul mkhar] foundations were made from gold, its four walls from silver, its four door jambs from iron, its four doors from conch, its four corners from *mchong* (agate) and its four lintels were made from copper. Its roof rises up into the 13 celestial tiers. Blizzards harboring a sleeping blue dragon constantly blow around it. *Khyung* birds hover around its flanks. The castle has 108 rooms. The upper third [of the castle] belongs to the *lha*. On the left side [of the upper third] there are formations of three flaming mountains and light, rays and thunder spread forth. This is the abode of the wrathful god Ge khod.[35] [The middle] third belongs to the Bon priests (*gshen*). Here live young, middle-aged and old yaks,[36] and horses, sheep and yaks roam about.[37] The *rnga* (drum),

30. 'Heaped form' (*spungs pa*) connotes a mountain of precious substances.
31. Although not mentioned by name, an Indian account states that the Bon po lama arrived at Gu ru Gyam in 1930, completing his monastery in the mid-1930s (Swami Pranavananda 1949: 105).
32. See, for example, Gyurme Dorje 1998, p. 404.
33. G. Tucci visited both Gu ru gyam and Khyung lung on his 1935 expedition to western Tibet. Beginning in India from the Kumaon Himalaya, he traveled by caravan to sPu Hrang and on to Gangs Ti se and Tsho Ma pham, both of which he circumambulated. He then explored parts of the Glang chen, sGar and Senge gTsang po valleys before returning to India via La dwags. He briefly describes the extensive ruins at the village of Khyung lung and provides photographs of the monastery and a decrepit castle located there, as well as a photograph of a wall that presumably belonged to a Zhang zhung period fortress. This wall is of a coursed rubble, dry mortar variety. See Tucci 1937, pp. 133-137, plates between pp. 100 and 101, plates between pp. 108 and 109. A photograph of the ancient cave complex of Khyung lung was also published in Swami Pranavananda 1949, no. 71.
34. rming gzhi gser la byas / log bzhi dngul la byas / sgo skyes pa lcags la byas / sgo bzhi dung la byas / zur bzhi mchong la byas / kha pad zangs la byas / rtse mo gnam rim pa bcu gsum du byung / bu yug rtag par 'khor / 'brug tong sngon nyal / bya khyung rtsigs su lding / mkhar mig brgya dang rtsa brgyad yod / sum cha yon chod lha yis bzungs / g.ya' brag gangs gsum bHar (='bar) / 'od zer thog gsum 'phro / lha drag ge khod gnas / sum cha gshen gyis bzungs / 'brog mo thil gsum mchis / rta lug gnag sum 'phyo / rnga gshang dung gsum sgrogs / bos (=bso) dbal bon gsum 'bad / zhang zhung gyer rgyung gnas / sum cha man chad klu'i bzungs / g.yu mtsho kyi li li / g.yu bun khrigs se khrig / chu srin dung gsum ngar / klu phrug gyur gsum rtse / mi mgon dkar po gnas / de ru zhabs phabs nas / zhang zhung bon la 'phrul ngag bon bshad na /.
35. Ge khod is a very important Bon tutelary deity in western Tibet. He dwells at Gangs Ti se and a mountain in Ru thog called Ge khod gNyan lung.
36. Alternatively wild and domesticated yaks and their cows (cf. Ramble 1995: 92).
37. This is clearly a reference to the pastoral way of life that has predominated in Upper

gshang (flat bell) and *dung* (conch shell); these three are played.[38] *bSo, dbal* and *bon*; these three are invoked.[39] This is the place of the Zhang zhung *gyer* and *rgyung.*[40] The lower one third belongs to the *klu*. [Here there is] a swirling turquoise lake and turquoise mists thickly gather.[41] [Here] *chu srin, dung*; these three roar.[42] Baby *klu, gyur*;[43] these three play. This is the abode of Mi mgon dkar po.[44] At all these places [sTon pa] reposed. At Bon Zhang zhung [sTon pa] taught Bon, which was heard in the respective languages [of all those present]

In a chapter of the cosmological work known as *mDzod sgra 'grel*,[45] the capital of Zhang zhung is referred to by two alternative names and is closely associated with two other named places lying in close proximity:[46]

Firstly, the import of the story is conceived as thus: In the ancient Zhang zhung

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Tibet for at least 3000 years, as well as alluding to the source of sustenance for the Bon priests.

38. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, these three are believed to have been the most important musical instruments of Zhang zhung. They function as sound offerings to various deities, to invoke the guardians, and to subdue demons and negative influences.
39. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, these three words are invoked at momentous occasions and symbolize the ancient Bön religion in ways that are no longer entirely clear. *bSo* (also spelled *bswo*) serves as an invocation for deities, a representation of the enlightened form of body, speech and mind, and the expression of the unification with one's *yi dam* (tutelary deity). *dBal* connotes something very powerful and very sharp, indicative of tremendous energy. Bon denotes the doctrines and practitioners of the religion.
40. The full import of these two words is no longer clear. In the historical period *Gyer* is synonymous with the Bon religion and its community of followers. *rGyung*, commonly prefixed to the names of Zhang zhung period personalities in Bon literature, also describes a class of mountain deities (rGyung dgu) in Upper Tibet and Khu nu that function as *pho lha* (divine protectors and progenitors of clans). In the pre-Buddhist period these two terms probably described two specific types or lineages of Bon practitioners.
41. To describe the lake and mist the onomatopoeias *kyi li li* and *khrigs se khrig* are respectively used.
42. Only two of the roaring beings are noted in the text.
43. The use of *gyur* probably presupposes both types of Tibetan otters: *gyur* and *sram*.
44. The chief protector *klu* (water serpent) of the Khyung lung locale.
45. This chapter is called *bDen pa bon kyi mdzod sgo sgra 'grel 'phrul gyi lde mig ces bya ba bzhugs so*. It is attributed to rGyung yar Bla chen Khod spungs (Dran pa Nam mkha'). The *mDzod sgra 'grel* examined here was published in Chab mdo by Lo ru bSod nams 'Gyur med, in 1988.
46. This passage is found on folio no. 3 and reads: dang po mdzad khungs lo rgyus kyi don ni / sngön zhang zhung gi yul I sho da na / shing A par ljon pa'i tshal / grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes kyi dbus / mkhar khyung lung dngul [mkhar] ma ma' zhes kyang bya / 'om po sgo bzhi zhes bya ba shig na / me tog pad ma 'od kyi gling na / mkhas pa chen po da mi thad ge las sogs pa'i / lo tsa dang dpon gsas su gyur pa / mkhas pa chen po mi brgyad bzhugs te /.

country of I sho da na,[47] in the middle of the city of Victorious Happy Ones,[48] there was a fortress known as Khyung lung dNgul mkhar Ma ma' among a garden of *A par ljon pa* trees.[49] It is also called 'Om po of the Four Portals. At this place of bright lotus flowers the great scholar Da mi Thad ge and other translators and *dpon gsas*, the Eight Great Scholars resided.[50]

In a history of the great saint Dran pa Nam mkha' we find a description of Khyung lung similar to the one in the *mDzod sgra 'grel* . Unquestionably these two accounts were derived from the same source:[51]

At one time, in the Zhang zhung country of I sho [da] na, in the land of Khyung po (Khyung lung), in the middle of the city of Victorious Happy Ones, there was the fortress called Khyung lung dNgul mkhar among *A pa ra na ljon* trees and bright lotus flowers. It had four doors inlaid with silver, and was also known as 'Om po of the Four Portals.

Another settlement and fortress is mentioned in the same history of Dran pa Nam mkha' as being located in Khyung pö (Khyung lung). They are the native place of the

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47. Evidently a province of Zhang zhung.
48. In the *Ti se'i dkar chag* (Norbu and Pratts 1989: 71), the country of Khyung lung rGyal ba mnyes is stated to have been the residence of three of the 18 kings of Zhang zhung: King sLas kra of Gu ge, holder of the resplendent jeweled horns of the bird (a kind of crown or helmet); King g.Yung (= rGyung) yar Mu Khod, holder of the resplendent rainbow horns of the bird; and King Kyi le Gu ge Un chen, holder of the conch horns of the bird.
49. The identity of this species of tree does not appear to be known to Bon scholars. The reference to a garden of them, apart from extolling the desirability of the location, is suggestive of the existence of a more amenable environment in Zhang zhung times.
50. The Eight Great Scholars lived in the Zhang zhung period and came from various adjoining countries, according to Bon tradition (see *mDzod sgra 'grel*, folio no. 3). The group comprises the following personages: sTong rgyung mThu chen of Zhang zhung, Sha ri dbu chen of Bod (Tibet), Gyim tsha rMa chung of lDe, Ne rgyung 'Phar bu of Me nyag, Za rang Me 'bar of sTag gzig, Kha yam rLung lce of Sum pa, Ngam pa lCe rings of Ge sar and dMu tsha Gyer med of sTangs chen.
51. This text is entitled *rGyung yar khod spungs kyi lo rgyus bzhugs so*. It is situated in the volume *Sources for a History of Bon: A collection of rare manuscripts from Bsam-gling monastery in Dolpo (Northwestern Nepal),* nos. 142-164. This volume was compiled and edited by Lopon Tenzin Namdak and published by the Tibet Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, in 1972. The passage reads (no. 146): yang res gcig na / yul zhang zhung gi yul I sho [da] na / shing A pa ra na ljon pa'i tshal / me tog pad ma 'od gyis kyi nang / grong gyer rgyal ba mnyes pa'i dbus / mkhar khyung lung dngul mkhar gyi khyung po'i lung pa dngul chu can gyi mkhar sgo bzhi dang ldan pa / 'om po sgo bzhi zhes bya ba na /.
52. Immediately after this description of their native land the text goes on to relate that this childless couple made an offering of six loads of *dkar gsum* (milk, yogurt and butter) and *mngar gsum* (sugar, honey and jaggery) to the Eight Great Scholars and requested

parents of Dran pa Nam mkha rGyung yar Mu Khod and Phra btsun Gung ma.[52] The account states,[53] "In the country of Khyung po, in the city of Resplendent Bliss, there is the fortress of Shel le rDzong phug.[54] In its beautiful gardens there are *ko lo ko sho* trees and various kinds of necterous flowers. It is a place of medicinal *ra sa ya na* and meadows of saffron."[55]

In a Bon philosophical text entitled *Bon thams cad kyi yang snying gtan tshig nges ba'i gal mdo tan tra nyi ma'i 'khor lo*[56] yet another castle is mentioned in conjunction with the city of Victorious Happy Ones (rGyal ba mNyes pa).[57] The passage reads:[58] "Beside the bank of Mu le ting,[59] in the center of the City of the Victorious Happy Ones, at the castle called Zo bo Khyung rtse, among the grove of *A par ljon pa* [trees], the *gshen* Ma ngor Pra phud requested the teachings of g.Yung drung sems kyi don zhus[60] from the great scholar Da mi Thad ge, who was resident there."

In the references given above we have enumerated three different forts (Khyung lung dNgul mkhar, Shel le rDzong phug and Zo bo Khyung rtse) and two cities (Gyal ba mNyes pa and bDe ldan 'Od 'phro) all located at Khyung lung, which verifies the observation of Bon scholars like Lopon Tenzin Namdag that this toponymn should be applied to a region and not one specific village. As stated above, the import of these

an issue. The blessing they received enabled the couple to produce a son, Dran pa Nam mkha'. In the *Ti se'i dkar chag* we are told that the parents of Dran pa Nam mkha' resided at Khyung lung dNgul mkhar, his father being the king (Norbu and Pratts 1989: 58-60, 121-123).

53. No. 146: Khyung po'i yul grong khyer bde ldan 'od 'phro / mkhar shel le rdzong phug / rtsi me tog sna tshogs mdzes pa'i tshal / shing ko lo ko sho / sman ra sa ya na dang / gur gum gyi spang yod pa'i gnas /.
54. Probably identical to She le dbal rtse, which is mentioned in the list of 18 fortresses found in the *Kun 'bum*. See p.28.
55. While such accounts clearly eulogize Khyung lung they may also represent a vestigial memory of the less harsh environment that once prevailed in the region.
56. This text was discovered at Dang ra Khyung rDzong by Gyer mi Nyi 'od (12th century) who conferred it upon rMa ston Srid 'dzin. It is found in a volume known as *Sha ri'i gal mdo*, published by Lo ru bSod nams 'Gyur med, in Chab mdo, in 1988. It is attributed to Sha ri dBu can in consultation with six other great Zhang zhung masters, as requested by Ma ngor Pra phud. The latter is said to have requested the *sNying gtan tshig* after completing his studies so that the legacy of the Bon teachings could be passed on to future generations. It contains a broad spectrum of philosophical doctrines.
57. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, the naming of this city in the text clearly illustrates that this is a reference to the Khyung lung region.
58. folio no. 22: ...mu le ting 'dus kyi 'gram / grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes byed kyi dbus / shing A par ljon pa'i bsil / mkhar zo bo khyung rtse zhes bya bas na / mkhas pa chen po da mi thad ge zhes bya ba bzhugs pa la / gshen ma ngor pra phud ces bya bas / g.yung drung sems kyi don zhus te /.
59. Can denote either of the holy lakes: Ma pham g.Yu mtsho or La lnga mTsho.
60. This refers to a tradition of comprehensive rDzogs chen teachings.

accounts is that the section of the Glang chen valley known as Khyung lung was a nexus of permanent settlement in the Zhang zhung period. A survey of the facts on the ground by the author, although still far from complete, supports the Bon textual claims as expounded in the quasi-historical literature we have examined.

Now let us examine the physical evidence found at mKhar gdong, one of, if not singly, the most important site in the Khyung lung valley. The hill of mKhar gdong occupies a geomantic as well as strategically important position above the confluence of four rivers: the Chu nag river flowing from the north, the Chu dkar river flowing from the southeast, the dKar 'dred river coming from Mon 'tsher and the Glang chen gTsang po (Sutlej River). In a wider geographic context, the site is important, for it straddles trade routes connecting southwest and northwest Tibet, the Indian Himalaya and western Nepal. The ruins at mKhar gdong (made primarily of conglomerate) can be divided into Lower and Upper sectors, which are separated by the temple enshrining the Dran pa Nam mkha' statue. Unfortunately, the extensive ruins found at mKhar gdong are in very poor condition, precluding a detailed assessment of the site. Nevertheless, its size alone indicates that it was once an important facility.

The highest point of the amphitheater-like Upper sector (elevation 4500 meters, located nearly 200 meters above the valley floor) is only two meters wide, but the hilltop widens as it slopes downwards until it is around 200 meters wide above the Dran pa Nam mkha' shrine. Located near the summit of mKhar gdong is the most intact structure found at the site, which measures ten meters (north to south) by 19 meters (east to west). The 2.5 meter high north wall of this edifice is built into the hillside. There is evidence of a few other structures in the Upper sector but even their wall footings are highly fragmentary. The most prominent structure in the Upper sector is the defensive wall that runs along the rim of both sides of the summit. The remains of this rampart on the west side of the hilltop are clearly visible and extend along the entire Upper sector for a distance of approximately 300 meters. This wall, where measurable, is 65 to 80 centimeters thick and two to three meters high, although none of it now extends above the rim of the hillside. The wall enclosing the east side of the hill has been largely destroyed. The longest extant section, 30 meters in length, is found near the high point of the hilltop. Ruins of other walls are found on the steep flanks of the hillside below the summit.

Only fragments of the defensive wall extending around the edge of the Lower sector of mKhar gdong are intact. This part of the wall may have been around 700 meters in length. The Lower sector consists of a dense collection of piles of debris and depressions in the ground, covering an area of no less than 15,000 square meters. A few of these depressions are two to five meters deep. There are also small coherent wall segments inside the tumuli, but not enough remains to gauge ground plans. However, from the amount of debris laying on the site it would appear that significant structures once stood here. The annihilation of the site could have something to do with its purported capital status. In the Lower sector small shards of unglazed dull redware have been found. Below the summit, on the south flank of the hill, are the earthen walls of a small reservoir reported to be an architectural feature of the original Zhang zhung fort.

(L-173; P-Iv) Name: Gangs Ti se'i Bon mKhar. Location: ridge-top overlooking the Se lung valley, Bar kha township, sPu Hrang county.

The Bon mKhar, located on an outlier of the celebrated mountain Gangs Ti se, is perched on an eponymous summit (elevation 5100 meters) that overlooks the Se lung valley. The site is identified as that of an ancient Bon fort by natives of the region (called Gangs ri ba), and commands excellent views of the Bar kha plain, La lnga mTsho and Ma pham g.Yu mtsho. Its position does indeed indicate that it was once a stronghold watching over the extensive ancient settlements on the flanks of Gangs Ti se. Despite having a Bon cultural status, Gangs Ti se'i Bon mKhar is a fairly popular place for the erection of prayer flags and the worship of personal deities, such as the *dgra lha*, *pho lha* and *skye lha,* by local supplicants of all sects. It may be because of such deities that the site never lost its association with the old religion. Measuring ten meters by 7.5 meters, the structure that once stood on the hilltop has been mostly destroyed. Nevertheless, there are small coherent wall sections extant, including the 1.5 meter high northeast corner of the structure.

Type-II: Structures, mostly religious, integrating caves and cliffs in their construction

As in the Buddhist period, caves and other sheltered locations in escarpments were the focus of religious use in the pre-Buddhist period.[1] The natural protection that caves and overhangs provide from the elements, especially when in close proximity to good water sources, means that they must have been eagerly sought by the inhabitants of Upper Tibet since the Paleolithic. In the extremely harsh and open environment of Upper Tibet these rock shelters continued to be occupied in subsequent periods, obscuring earlier traces. On the UTCE, I inventoried a number of cave systems, which oral histories and legends indicate were in use in the pre-Buddhist period and possibly abandoned before the early historical period. However, no attempt was made to uncover the earliest occupation layers at these cave systems. At a good number of sites these have been obscured by bird droppings or geological deposits. Superficial structural evidence at the caves and escarpments points to a relatively late period of origin, probably coinciding with the Zhang zhung-Mon period. In some circumstances pre-Buddhist cave complexes continued to be occupied up to the Modern period. Bon po occupation is indicated at some sites by red ochre pictographs of counterclockwise *g.yung drung*. As the Bon po were dislodged from many areas of Upper Tibet between the 10th and 13th centuries, the *g.yung drung* often provide graphic evidence of occupation prior to this period. Rock art found on some caves and formations demonstrates that these were intensively used throughout the Zhang zhung-Mon period.

The most common structures at caves and escarpments in both the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist period are enclosing walls. These facades effectively seal the formations, creating excellent shelter from the very difficult environmental conditions of Upper Tibet. While facade walls have been constructed even in the Communist period, it was in the pre-Buddhist period that this type of architecture reached its full development. This is indicated by the frequency of sites with extensive physical remains attributed in oral histories and legends to the Mon, Ge sar epic figures and the Zhang zhung kingdom. These early walls were customarily very heavily built of random-rubble and could have

1. Also see Bellezza 2001; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 1999a; 1997a.

potentially endured intact for centuries. In the pre-Buddhist period fairly elaborate facilities were built at escarpments hosting caves and overhangs. These include two or more facades extending laterally from the formations, which must have created various forerooms, terraced walls and steps leading to the formations. At some sites there are also the remains of free-standing buildings in the vicinity. In certain structures there is evidence of all-stone roofs built in the same manner as those of the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology.

(L-174; P-IIa) Name: sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling (Happiness Meditation Cave Monastery). Location: Dang chung, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county.

The geomantic heart of the site is a large cave that forms the nucleus of a substantial retreat building belonging to Thub bstan gSang sngags Chos gling, the Buddhist monastery at Dang chung. A number of other caves are also located in the limestone formation, which overlooks Dang chung mTsho and has a southwest aspect. Senior monks are under the impression that the caves of sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling were originally part of a Zhang zhung era religious center that devolved to the Buddhists. The presence of cave shelters certainly suggests that the site has long been the focus of human activity. As sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling has been under the physical and ritual control of the Buddhists for centuries, only a generalized memory of the earlier period exists and therefore there is no recollection of what ruins, if any, belonged to the early Bon po.

Among the most degraded ruins at sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling are those found against the escarpment west of the main retreat structure. These consist of an obscured structural residuum situated below a ledge hosting two small contemporary retreat houses. Above the main retreat center there are three caves with anthropogenic modifications, one of which was in use until the Communist period. East of the main retreat center are other minor structures including a refurbished facade wall.

The most intriguing manmade remains at sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling are located on the inaccessible summit of the limestone mountain (elevation 4700 meters). Covering an area with maximum dimensions of 30 meters by 27 meters, there are about 15 oval-shaped enclosures on the summit whose walls reach a height of 1.5 meters. There are also another six structures of the same type west of the summit. These enclosures, built of local limestone, are reported to have never supported roofs, and this is borne out by the rough construction of the walls and the long spans between them. The highly disintegrated mud mortar used to cement the walls serves as a matrix for the growth of lichen.

On a nearby summit known as bSam grub Khyung rDzong (Wish-Fulfilling Eagle Fort) is a similar site consisting of around 12 walled cells (elevation 4800 meters). This site covers an area approximately measuring 15 meters by 30 meters. Built at several elevations the walls extend to a height of two meters. bSam grub Khyung rDzong occupies a strategic position overlooking the bTsag la (Ochre pass), the main access to the Dang chung basin from the east. According to elders of Dang chung village, the hilltop remains at sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling and bSam grub Khyung rDzong were fortifications constructed to repel an invasion by the Dzungar Mongols some 250 years

ago.[2] With their unobstructed views these structures do indeed seem to be breastworks erected for a defensive purpose. It may, however, be useful to leave open the question of their age for the following reasons: *(1)* I have received no other reports of similar hilltop fortifications being built during the Dzungar invasion; *(2)* the typological resemblance of these ruins to earlier fortifications; and *(3)* the lack of an obvious strategic reason for locating fortifications on two mountains in the same proximity in a campaign against the Dzungars.

(L-175; IIb) Name: sTag Brag khung. Location: on the east side of sTag khra mountain in the Dang chung mTsho basin, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county.

sTag Brag khung has an east aspect overlooking Dang chung mTsho. Virtually nothing is known about the small, isolated, cave heritage of sTag Brag khung save that it is ancient. This belief is supported by the advanced deterioration of the facades around the caves, the lack of modern religious symbolism such as *mani* stone fragments, *tshwa tshwa* and prayer flags, and the absence of a permanent water supply at the site. Some Bon po of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho claim that sTag Brag khung was a Zhang zhung era religious center, but this could not be verified with the recognized experts in the region. According to one source, a Bon lama of the O bo clan 'Be rtsa rGyal ba is supposed to have meditated here. The founder of the Dang chung monastic lineage, Khro phu lo rtsa ba (circa 15th century) is supposed to have meditated here as he did at all the other cave hermitages in the Dang chung basin. One of the five caves at sTag brag Khung is named after him.

Four of the caves are situated on the east side of a limestone outcrop but the largest cave (Cave V) is on the south side of the formation. This cave is nearly six meters deep and is enclosed by the remains of a nine meter long facade. In the rear are three masonry

2. According to several elders of Dang chung village, the Dzungars were led by a man named Tshe ring Don grub, who was defeated by the local chieftain Dang chung mGon po (his father is said to have been the local *yul lha* Jo bo dBu gtsug). The slain Dzungar's hands and head were sent to Lhasa and as a reward, the bDe ba gzhung government commissioned the construction of the nine storey Dang chung rDzong. The ruins of this small fort still stand in the village and despite the oral accounts, its diminutive size indicates that it was no more than three stories tall (there are also the ruins of another small fort in the village said to have been built more recently). There is a small *'og dong* (basement) under the ruins of the older fort that was built with an all-stone roof, which if contemporaneous, was probably constructed about 250 years ago. Reportedly, some of the oldest houses in Dang chung also had *'og dong,* which were used for storage but all of these have been destroyed. Nevertheless, local elders believe, just as their counterparts in 'Om bu do, that in the Zhang zhung period the semi-subterranean *'og dong* were used as habitations (Bellezza 2001: 138-140). According to local legend, the Dang chung basin was under the control of the Bon po until the time of Gu ru Rin po che, who renamed it U rgyan Bes lung. Whether ancient domiciles of the *'og dong* type were found in Dang chung is debatable, for it is not known if the village existed in the pre-Buddhist period. In fact, the founding of the village is traced to three Buddhist families: sNang pa, Po rtsun and Che mda.'

platforms constructed at different levels. Bits of red ochre paint cover the uppermost platform signaling the religious function (as an altar?) of this structure. The caves on the east side of the formation have the following anthropogenic modifications (examined in a north to south direction):

Cave I : 3.5 meters deep with a stone and adobe platform in the rear, which has remnants of red ochre paint on it.

Cave II : remains of a wall footing enclosing a level area around an overhang measuring three meters by three meters.

Cave III : base of five meter long facade that enclosed a shallow cave, and possibly an outlying wall

Cave IV : base of wall that enclosed a 4.5 meter long cave suspended in the escarpment.

(L-176) Name: Lha lung Brag dkar gSang ba'i gnas (Secret Place of Divine Valley White Cliff). Location: upper Lha lung valley, rGya sgog township, Nyi ma county.

Overlooking Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, this site consists of a crumbling stone foundation measuring nine meters by nine meters situated below a granite outcrop named Lha lung Brag dkar (elevation 4850 meters). The foundation encloses a level area with a small cave on one side. Reportedly, in the Tiger Year 1986, in heavy storms, the cave collapsed, and it can no longer be entered. Lha lung Brag dkar gSang ba'i gnas is said to have been used by rDzogs chen practitioners of the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud lineage, but no information on its chronology seems to have survived. This site may have been used by the historic era Bon saint bShag sgom Tshul khrims (Bellezza 2001: 117).

(L-177; P-IIc) Name: rDzong dkar po (White Castle). Location: head of the Nag ra ma valley, Ri dmar township, sGer rtse county.

The large red and white eponymous limestone outcrop located here shelters ruins that are believed to have been constructed by the Mon pa, and which are now said to be inhabited by brown bears (elevation 5100 meters). Most informants in sGer rtse believe that rDzong dkar po was an ancient religious center, and according to dKon mchog rGyal mtshan, aged 70,[3] rDzong dkar po was the main center of Mon habitation in the sTong mTsho region. Its location in the isolated high end of the Nag ra ma valley confers the site with a geographical aspect often associated with Tibetan monasteries. The all-stone structures found at rDzong dKar po have an architectural affinity with the 'Zhang zhung' religious centers found on the east side of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. The identification of rDzong dkar po with the Mon seems to indicate that its origins lay in the pre-Buddhist period, but the presence of a clockwise swastika sculpted on the hearth in one of the upper rooms of Structure VI suggests that the complex was also utilized by the Buddhists. In the oral histories, rDzong dkar po is exclusively identified with the

3. This individual, belonging to the sGer rtse clan, now resides in Kathmandu and is one of the top authorities on the history and lore of sGer rtse still living. dKon mchog rGyal mtshan is the younger brother of Gan po Ri gyam, a respected leader of sGer rtse in the pre-Communist period who founded the monastery of Sag the Brag gyam, circa 1957.

Mon pa and therefore possible Buddhist occupation of the site is most likely to have occurred in the early historical period (*bstan pa snga dar*).

In the 1960s, an agricultural experiment was conducted in the middle part of the Nag ra ma valley, at an elevation of 4600 meters. Like so many other farming ventures conducted by the Chinese in the Byang thang, this one proved a failure and was abandoned. No information was forthcoming on whether the area was farmed in ancient times.

rDzong dKar po consists of seven or eight edifices, which were built into cliffs and outcrops. At the east end of the site, under an overhang in an outcrop, are wall footings enclosing an area measuring 11 meters by three meters (Structure I). Forty meters to the west, the walls of the two meter by three meter Structure II are largely intact. Built against a boulder, the small entrance to this semi-subterranean structure is in the east. One stone roof brace or corbel is still in place on the top of the walls and others lay on the ground inside the building. Fifty meters to the north is Structure III, measuring 1.75 meters by 1.75 meters. Also built against a boulder, the stone lintel over the one meter tall, 50 centimeter wide entranceway of this building is intact. In close proximity is a slightly larger building, which also has walls that are largely intact and an *in situ* lintel. Approximately 55 meters further west are the remains of Structure IV, constructed at two elevations and measuring six meters by three meters. The lower tier is mostly reduced to its foundations but the upper tier is relatively intact. Built against an outcrop, the walls, lintel, three roof beams and two pieces of roof sheathing in the upper tier remain in place. Like other buildings at rDzong dkar po, the walls of Structure IV were constructed of limestone, while the roof members were hewn from a fine-grained dark-colored stone. The east-facing entrance to the upper tier is one meter tall and 50 centimeters wide. The interior floor to ceiling height of this building is 1.5 to 1.7 meters. Ten meters to the west is Structure V, which has been reduced to fragmentary wall footings encompassing an area of six meters by four meters.

Approximately 25 meters north of Structure IV, at the base of a huge limestone cliff, is Structure VI, the single largest edifice at rDzong dkar po. This edifice was built in two tiers and has a maximum length of 16 meters. One room with its stone roof partially intact has survived in the western section of the lower tier of the building. Its interior dimensions are two meters by 1.75 meters. In this room cantilevered beams bearing on corbels span the outer masonry wall and cliff face, with stone roof sheathing laid on top of them. The upper and lower sections of Structure VI are separated by walls built against the escarpment that are as much as two meters in height. Two rear rooms of what were probably a total of six rooms in the upper section of Structure VI are largely integral. Located in the western portion of the building, one of these rooms has maximum interior dimensions of 3.5 meters by four meters. About 50 percent of its roof is intact and the roof beams spanning the cliff face and outer wall are regularly 1.4 meters in length. The jambs, lintel and threshold stone of the 1.3 meter high, 45 centimeter wide doorway have been preserved. From floor to ceiling this room has a height of more than two meters. Inside, a stone and adobe hearth was decorated with a parget clockwise *g.yung drung*, *dkyil 'khor* (circular design) and *nyi zla* (conjoined sun and

moon). Other interior features include stone shelving, two niches in the rear wall and a floor to ceiling rounded alcove 65 centimeters in width. The other largely intact adjacent rear room, measuring 3.3 meters by four meters, has an independent entrance (the lintel is intact). Inside there is a stone table supported on stone legs located in front of a recess in the cliff. Much of the roof has survived in this room: long roof beams spanning the cliff and outer wall support stone slab sheathing. These commodious upper rear rooms with their fairly elaborate stone appointments, relatively high entranceways and ceilings, and their location at the uppermost part of the site must have been the ritual or political center of rDzong dKar po.

Structure VII, situated 27 meters west of Structure VI, contains four rooms in varying states of preservation. Constructed against the escarpment, these four rooms stretch for 13 meters. Inside the northerly-most room a bit of ochre painted plaster clings to the walls. Several niches were built into the rear wall of this room. Walls to 1.5 meters in height and the entrance, measuring 1.2 meters in height and 50 centimeters in width, have endured. The roof and lintel in the adjacent room have also survived. Likewise, in the next room to the south the stone lintel is *in situ,* while the extreme south room has been leveled to its wall footings.

(L-178; P-IId) Name: Brag 'khor sgang (Circle Hill-Spur Rock). Location: rGod tshang township, sGer rtse county.

This site consists of an ancient cave shelter of which little or nothing appears to be known (elevation 4620 meters). The obscurity of Brag 'khor sgang and its peculiar architectural features may indicate a pre-Buddhist status but this could not be corroborated. Circumstantial evidence for an early foundation date includes: 1) unusual three-tiered aspect of the structure; 2) no overt Buddhist associations or symbolism on the site such as *mani* plaques or prayer flags; and 3) 'herring-bone' courses of masonry on the upper level, not unlike that found in edifices accompanying the monolithic arrays.

In the white limestone formation of the same name is a cave with more than ten meter tall walls, creating three levels. The walls of this well built, west-facing structure have undergone much deterioration, thus their exact lay-out is not discernible. It appears that steps led up to the entrance and from there to a landing. The second level of the cave is the largest and measures 4.5 meters (north to south) by 3.5 meters (east to west). It is covered in thick deposits of bird droppings. Surrounding the upper level of the cave is elaborate masonry work that is now highly fractional.

(L-179; P-IIe) Name: Ma mig Brag dkar. Location: in the Brag dkar valley, above the north side of Ma mig Tshwa mtsho, Ma mig township, sGer rtse county.

I have identified Ma mig Brag dkar of the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud masters with the cave of rGod tshang pa, at Ma mig monastery (Bellezza 2000a: 28; 2001: 119). However, I have now been informed by the head of the Ma mig monastery Ngag dbang Blo gros Rin po che (born 1930), that the primary site at Ma mig connected with the Zhang zhung period Bon po masters is actually located approximately 30 kilometers to the north. This very remote site called Brag dkar Shel rDzong is situated at the head of a long gorge. A difficult route over one of two 5200 meter passes accesses the white limestone escarpment of Brag dkar Shel rDzong. The altitudinous and isolated aspect of the site is certainly in keeping with the preferred location for religious centers in Upper Tibet, particularly in evidence in the pre-Buddhist period.

In the Brag dkar Shel rdzong formation there are several caves with the remnants of facades, which are reported to have been occupied in the Zhang zhung period. At the base of the escarpment there are a number of stone rings of the Mon *ra* typology, four to eight meters in diameter. Some of these round structures have inner circular structures. On the south side of the site there is an interconnected row of four rings. The Ma mig Rin po che is under the impression that these structures date to the time of the early Bon po, but that they are probably not graves. In the vicinity, covering some 700 square meters, are the ruins of half a dozen stone and adobe buildings belonging to a nunnery believed to have been founded by the first lama of Ma mig Gangs shar mThong sgrol, roughly 800 years ago. On a shelf above the ruined monastery is another building carcass, and on the opposite side of the Brag dkar river there are other foundations of unknown provenance. Southwest of Brag dkar Shel rdzong, on the route leading towards the pass linking the Ma mig Tshwa mtsho basin, is a single demolished building measuring six meters by seven meters.

(L-180; P-IIf) Name: bTsag tig. Location: lower reaches of the Shangs chu, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

The function, age and even the correct spelling of the name of this monument are not known to regional elders. The 14 meter long bTsag tig consists of at least seven small rooms that were built at three levels in a rocky bluff overlooking the Shangs chu. The site is far removed from contemporary permanent settlement.

The trunks of tamarisk (*'om bu*) used in the construction of the lintels and roofs of bTsag tig are larger in girth than those now growing in the nearby relict grove of trees. Constructed of limestone, the walls of the two lower rooms and the walls of the two outer rooms of the middle level are highly fragmentary. However, the two inner rooms of the middle level are in significantly better condition. The most intact room has much of its gravel, clay and tamarisk roof intact, and mud plaster still clings to the walls. The beams of *'om bu* only have a short distance to span between the cliff and outer wall of this room. Inside the 2.5 meter by three meter room is a stone platform and a niche with an *'om bu* lintel. Nothing endures of the hearth in the most intact middle level room, although the walls and ceiling are fire-blackened. An interconnecting (by way of a small portal), similarly sized room has an *'om bu* lintel over an opening in the outer wall. The exterior wall is bonded with *'om bu*. There are also the remains of a stone platform in this room. The roof however, has been lost. The upper level of bTsag tig consists of a small ruined room on the rim of the bluff and the remains of a parapet-like wall that enclosed the facility.

(L-181; P-IIg) Name: Chu mKhar gyam sGrub phug (Walled Water Castle Meditation Cave). Location: upper rDo dmar Chu valley, rDo dmar township, Ru thog county.

What appears once to have been an important habitation is situated at the edge of a marshy pasture in a geographical crossroads formed by three valleys. It is situated below the remains of the Chu mKhar gyam castle (see p. 39) and consists of a large walled cave, which according to some local elders, was first inhabited by the Mon. The

large limestone cavern (30 meters deep and in places six meters high) and 18 meter long wall that encloses it are reminiscent of rDzong dKar po, near Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, which is also attributed to the pre-Buddhist period (see Bellezza 2000a: 28; 2001: 118, 119). Chu mKhar gyam, however, clearly also has a Buddhist period legacy as demonstrated by a single panel of Gu ge period frescos located in the middle of its right wall (see p. 145 for a description of these paintings). A steep climb up a fissure from the valley bottom brings one to the entrance of the Chu mKhar gyam sGrub phug. The facade that enclosed the entrance is partially intact up to the level of the cave floor. This wall is 45 centimeters thick and a maximum of three meters in height, but at one time it must have been significantly higher. There is also evidence of a parallel foundation wall inside the Chu mKhar gyam cavern.

(L-182; P-IIh) Name: Gu ru Gyam dGon pa (Guru Rock Shelter Monastery). Location: Mon 'tsher township, sGar county.

Gu ru gyam is the name of a well known escarpment in the Glang chen (Sutlej) valley with more than two dozen caves. The main hermitage located here is called g.Yung drung Rin chen 'Bar ba'i sGrub phug (Meditation Cave of the Blazing Jewel Swastika) (elevation 4300 meters).[4] According to the monks of Gu ru Gyam (led by the well known 80-year-old lama and doctor bsTan 'dzin dBang grags), this hermitage contains the cave that was used by the renowned Zhang zhung era saint Dran pa Nam mkha'; however, no original structural features from this period are extant. The g.Yung drung Rin chen 'Bar ba'i sGrub phug has a three storey white-washed facade and several chambers inside.[5] The actual cave, believed to have been used by Dran pa Nam mkha', is situated at an upper level and is richly appointed with religious articles. Stored in the gallery that is suspended in the cliff face outside this cave is a large mortar and pestle said to have been used by the Zhang zhung saint. This tradition, however, is probably apocryphal because Dran pa Nam mkha' is not known to have been a physician. The nunnery founded by Khyung sprul Rin po che approximately 65 years ago, in the east part of the escarpment, still lies in ruins. However, in the mid-1980s, the main monastery called Khyung lung dNgul mKhar mDo sNgags Grags rgyas Gling was rebuilt on the plain immediately below Gu ru Gyam. Also in the plain are the remains of a Buddhist, probably dGe lugs pa sect, monastery locally called dPal rgyas Gling.[6] This complex consists of the remains of nine or ten large *mchod rten* surrounding a square earthen mound measuring around 200 square meters.

4. See bsTan 'dzin dBang grags 1996, p. 281, 310.
5. The less elaborate facade of this cave in the pre-Communist period was captured in a photograph. See Tucci 1937, plate between pp. 96 and 97.
6. In one guidebook to the region this ruin is mistakenly identified as a "Zhang zhung Gonpa" (Gyurme Dorje 1998: 404). For a photograph of this ruined monastery taken in the pre-Communist period see Tucci 1937, plate between pp. 100 and 101. Swami Pranavananda (1949: 104) informs us that the monastery and settlement of dPal rgyas were destroyed by the Dogra invader Zoravar Singh in 1841. It is not clear whether this monastery is related to the dPal rgyas Buddhist temple of the *bstan pa snga dar*.

There are, however, ancient ruins at Gu ru Gyam within view of the mKhar gdong citadel (see p. 41-47). According to the Bon po monks, these could well date to the Zhang zhung period, but this could not be independently confirmed. These structural remains, made primarily of conglomerate blocks (but also sandstone and metamorphic rock), are found on a shelf above the Gu ru Gyam escarpment. The largest structure measures 11.5 meters (east to west) by 16 meters (north to south), and is partitioned into as many as ten rooms. In section, the walls of this shell are up to 90 centimeters and in elevation they attain 1.7 meters. The exterior of the structure is elevated about three meters above the surrounding ground level by a revetment. Approximately 20 meters to the north are the faint traces of a foundation measuring six meters across. Approximately 135 meters northwest of the large structure there is another less well preserved specimen that measures nine meters by ten meters. Along its outer edge there are a couple of small coherent wall segments, otherwise little remains standing. In close proximity are the faint traces of more minor structures.

(L-183; P-IIi) Name: Shel 'dra (Crystal Likeness). Location: upper Se lung valley, Bar kha township, sPu Hrang county.

Shel 'dra, one of the best known hermitages at Gangs Rin po che has been used by the Buddhists for centuries and was most recently restored in the aftermath of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It is located up valley from Se lung monastery below the dBang phyug gi Pho brang formation and has a southeast aspect (elevation 5300 meters).[7] Spanning 14 meters of the cliff face, the modern construction has incorporated older structures of unknown pedigree. These include two rooms built into an overhang in the cliff on the south side of the historical era hermitage. Also, on the north side of the heritage, there are three small rooms, two of which still have their stone slab roofs supported by corbels fully intact.

Also in the cliff, southwest of Shel 'dra, are the remains of five small cells stretching for 12 meters. Each of these cells is only about 2.5 meters deep and two meters or less in width and could have only accommodated one inmate. Like Shel 'dra, these must have been constructed with a religious purpose in mind. Above the five ruined cells, on a higher ledge, are the remains of what are probably two more specimens.

A little further west is another meditational complex built into a deep overhang in the Shel 'dra escarpment, effectively protecting the site from rock falls. It consists of two smaller structures and a larger, relatively well preserved example. The larger building measures 4.5 meters by nine meters and contains five rooms. The two south rooms in this structure are bereft of their roofs, while the two central rooms have fully intact all-stone roofs and the north room a partially intact stone roof. The roof over these rooms was built in the manner typical of ancient Upper Tibet: stone slabs were laid on top of beams that bear down upon corbels. The three better preserved rooms have a separate

7. Mention of Shel 'dra is found in *Gangs ri chen po ti se'i dkar chag rab 'byed shel dkar me long* (*Ti se'i gnas bshad*) composed by 'Bri gung pa dKon mchog, in 1896 (no. 158). The edition used by the author was published in Delhi by Konchog Lhadrepa.

entrance and considerably smaller internal entrances between the rooms that measure 1.1 meters in height and 45 centimeters and 55 centimeters respectively in width. The largest of the intact rooms has internal dimensions of 2.6 meters by two meters. Inside there are the remains of a fireplace, as well as stone niches and shelving. In the outer wall there are two small openings to admit light. No information on this site was forthcoming, but if it was constructed after the Buddhist conversion of mNga' ris province, circa 1000 CE, it demonstrates that small edifices with all-stone roofs were an integral feature of Buddhist religious architecture at Gangs Ti se.

Type-III: Free-standing religious edifices

In addition to buildings that depended on natural rock walls for their structural integrity there are free-standing edifices throughout Upper Tibet that are attributed by local residents to the pre-Buddhist Mon, Zhang zhung and the early Bon po. Called *gsas mkhar* and *rdo khang*, these are noted in the Bon literary reference to the 19 fortresses of the Zhang zhung period we examined above (see pp. 27, 28, n. 9), as well as in the passage translated in this section. These types of buildings are often found in close association with cliffs and escarpments, and can include structures built in caves. There are, however, a significant number of sites that are not located near cliffs and caves, necessitating a differentiation of typologies. However, the typological overlap that exists, in tandem with their imputed religious functions, demonstrates that Type-II and Type-III sites are culturally and functionally interrelated.

Buildings attributed by local sources as representing religious edifices belonging to the Mon and people of Zhang zhung also share in common many of the architectural and building features of the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress typology (such as small, usually windowless, multiple rooms of various shapes, and multi-tiered layout). In particular the random-work, often dry mortar walls and all-stone slab roofs of the religious edifices mirror the techniques and styles of construction found in the early fortresses. This, as well as their geographic distribution, proves that the two types of monuments are culturally and chronologically related. The major difference between the two types of edifices concerns their relative locations: the castles were built on summits with strategic defensive value, while the religious edifices are situated at the base of cliffs, or on slopes that are not easily defended. As location and oral historical attributions are the major criteria distinguishing Type-I sites from Type-III sites, and in light of close cultural affinities, a level of functional overlap is probably indicated, for there is no reason why religious edifices could not have been integrated in fortresses and fortified settlements. This is well supported by the politico-religious nexus existing in pre-Buddhist Upper Tibet, as well as by the existence of temples in virtually all Tibetan castles of the historical period. There is a morphological difference between Type-I and Type-III sites, but this is best explained by the exigencies of the terrain. This has to do with the fact that the religious edifices often have a semi-subterranean aspect especially on their uphill slope (rear) side. By virtue of being built in the ground the state of structural preservation of

the *gsas mkhar* is often much better than that of the fortresses.

Like the castles attributed to the Mon and inhabitants of Zhang zhung, the similarly attributed religious edifices are not well represented east of eastern Nag tshang.[1] Likewise, chronological parallels exist between the two typologies. The oral histories indicate that the all-stone religious edifices were primarily founded anterior to the close of the Imperial period. Nevertheless, their broad distribution in Upper Tibet west of gNam ru and the absence of antecedent religious structural typologies suggest that they enjoyed a long life-span. An assumption that they were first founded in the First Millennium BCE may be indicated by the existence of the Tibetan slab grave and pillar typologies, which share the same geographic distribution, constructional qualities and occasionally the very same sites. Leaving aside the question of origins, we can reasonably assert that the all-stone religious edifices were in place by the early centuries of our Common Era and that, along with cave structures, they represented the largest and most common religious architectural type in the Zhang zhung-Mon period. At a later date there is some evidence to show that smaller all-stone buildings, especially in places popular with the Buddhists such as Ti se, may have been constructed or rebuilt in the archaic style as late as the *bstan pa phyi dar* or even up to the 13th century (see p. 65, n. 27).

The presence of significant communities of religious practitioners in Upper Tibet in the Zhang zhung period is recorded in the Bon text *Ti se'i dkar chag*.[2] The patronage of these communities by various regional Zhang zhung kings is explicitly stated. Although we cannot yet make direct correlations it is clear that the religious communities enumerated in this account are situated in areas of important pre-Buddhist archaeological monuments. The religious centers noted in the *Ti se'i dkar chag* are all located in far western and southwestern Tibet, excluding vast regions of the Byang thang from the account. Perhaps most importantly, the *Ti se'i dkar chag* contains a reference to a place or complex of stone houses (*rdo yi khang bu'i gling*) occupied by Zhang zhung era religious practitioners. Despite its characterization of Zhang zhung era religious personnel as *arhats* (*dgra lcom*) and *bodhisattvas* (*g.yung drung sems dpa'*), a perhaps not even self-conscious concession on the part of the 19th century author to the prevailing Buddhist environment of Tibet, the passage is based on much older sources. The

1. The exception being the north shore of gNam mTsho where there are a number of ruins associated with the early Bon po. See Bellezza 1996; 1997a.
2. The full name of this text is *'Dzam gling gangs rgyal ti se'i dkar chag tshangs dbyangs yid phrog* (= *'phrog*) *zhes bya ba dbus phyogs bzhugs sHo*, written by dKar ru Grub dbang bsTan 'dzin Rin chen (born 1801). The author had traveled form his homeland in Hor chen to Dol po, Glo and western Tibet, writing the text in the Ti se region circa 1844. The text is found between nos. 491-657 of the composite volume *mDzod phug rtsa ba dang spyi don dang gangs ri ti se'i dkar chag*, published by Tashi Dorje in 1973, Tibet Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji. The same passage has been translated by Norbu and Pratts (1989: 117-119), using a critically edited text compiled from the manuscript described above, as well as a copy purchased in western Tibet by Tucci in 1935. The differences in lacunae in the two versions indicates that they both derive from other manuscripts (Norbu and Pratts 1989: XXII).

symmetrical arrangement of the descriptions has the ring of lore that could well have been passed down orally for many generations:[3]

3. Nos. 573-578: gshen lo brgyad chu rdzogs nas gdung tshab chen po mu cho ldem drug byon te / 'dzam gling gi phyogs bcur bstan pa spel ba'i dus su yang / stag gzig gi yul nas drang srong khri lde 'od po zhes bya ba / bya rgod du sprul ste / zhang zhung gi yul gangs ti se shel gyi mchod rten lta bu'i mgul / gnas brtan rin chen pho brang du / gnas brtan chen po 'od khri mu spungs kyi drung du bab ste / rang rang gi zhe sa dang bsnyung 'dri ba la sogs mdzad do / gangs rin chen po'i g.yon phyogs A ti gsang ba g.yung drung phug tu / dgra bcom sems dpa'i 'dus sde drug stong du bstan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / gangs ri chen po de'i mdun du gar ljong g.yu lo rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru yang / {rgyang grags dgon pa zer} zhang zhung srid pa'i rgyal po khri wer la rje gser gyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du yang khri lde 'od po'i slob ma / drang srong dang ba yid ring zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung phu dmar Hring gi yul du mu le mtsho yi gling du / dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde sum stong sum brgya ru bstan pa spel lo / de'i dus su yang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / pu mar Hring gi yul du stag chen rngam pa'i yongs rdzogs mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / spungs rgyung gyer gyi rgyal po 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du yang dang ba yid ring gi slob ma drang srong gung rum gtsug phud ces bya ba des / zhang zhung tsi na'i yul {gro shod zer} bye ma g.yung drung tshal du / dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde chen po chig khri bdun stong du bstan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po zhang zhung tsi na'i shod dum pa tshal gser gyi mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / gu wer nor gyi rgyal po ga ljang 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du yang gung rum gtsug phud kyi slob ma / drang srong rdzu 'phrul ye shes zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung spos ri ngad ldan pa'i shar phyogs / la mar rdo yi khang bu'i gling du / dgra bcoms g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde chen po stong phrag du ma ru btsan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / zhang zhung tsi na'i yul spos ri ngad ldan gyi rtsab / grong khyer stag na gling gi dbus / {bon ri stag sna rong zer} stag sna dbal gyi rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / stag sna gzi brjid rgyal po khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du'ang rdzu 'phrul ye shes kyi slob ma / drang srong ye shes tshul khrims zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung kha spug (= yug) gi yul bdud rtsi sman gyi nags tshal du / dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde stong dang drug bcu'i btsan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / zhang zhung kha yug gi yul mu rdzong chen po khro chu'i mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / sad Hri gyer gyi rgyal po Udpal 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du'ang ye shes tshul khrims kyi slob ma / drang srong g.yung drung tshul khrims zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung khyung lung gi grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes yul gyi khab khyung chen spungs pa'i ri la yang / {mkhar gdong zer} dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde grangs med du bstan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / grong khyer rgyal ba mnyes yul gyi dngul mkhar dkar po khro chu'i rmengs rdo can de ru yang / slas kra gu ge'i rgyal po rin chen 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du'ang g.yung drung tshul khrims kyi slob ma / drang srong gtsug phud rgyal ba zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung ru thog gi yul gsang brag g.yung drung gtams pa'i tshal / dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde stong phrag du ma ru btsan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / zhang zhung ru thog gnam rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / mu mar thog rgod rgyal po Enta 'od kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du yang gstug phud rgyal ba'i slob ma / drang srong

When 80 *gshen* years[4] had passed [after the death of sTon pa], at the time of his successor Mu cho ldem drug,[5] the [Bon] Doctrine had spread in the ten directions of the world. Also, at that time, the sage from the country of sTag gzig called Khri lde 'Od po manifested as a vulture and landed beside the senior-most *gnas brtan*[6] 'Od khri Mu spungs on the flanks of Gangs Ti se, which is like a crystal *mchod rten*, the jeweled palace of practitioners, in the country of Zhang zhung. They courteously exchanged greetings and other words. On the left side of Gangs Rin po che, at the A ti gsang ba g.Yung drung cave,[7] [Khri sde 'Od po] propagated the [Bon] Doctrine to a community of 6000 *arhats* and *bodhisattvas*. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was the Zhang zhung king of existence Khri wer La rje, holder of the golden horns of the bird,[8] based at the castle of Gar ljong g.Yu lo rDzong ([now] called rGyang grags monastery), located in front of Gangs Rin po che. Also, similarly, the disciple of Khri lde 'Od po, the sage called Dang ba Yid ring, propagated the [Bon] Doctrine

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ye shes rgyal ba zhes bya ba des / zhang zhung spos ri ngad ldan gyi rta ba grong gyer stag sna gling gi khab mchod rten gHan dHa chen po'i drung du yang / dgra bcom g.yung drung sems dpa'i 'dus sde drug stong du bstan pa spel lo / de'i dus su'ang zhabs nas 'degs pa'i rgyal po / zhang zhung tsi na'i yul spos ri ngad ldan gyi rtsa ba / grong khyer stag gling gi dbus / stag sna dbal gyi rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba de ru / stag sna gzi brjid rgyal po khri ldem lcags kyi bya ru can nyid do / de ltar du'ang ye shes rgyal ba'i slob ma / drang srong dpal gyi dbang phyug zhes bya ba des / bod kyi yul du 'dul ba'i bstan pa rgyal chen por spel ba'o /.

4. One *gshen* year is equal to 100 ordinary years.
5. He was the son of sTon pa Shes rab.
6. Specifically refers to Vinaya lineage practitioners in the Bon tradition.
7. The A ti gsang ba g.Yung drung cave site by being described as located on the left (east) side of Gangs Rin po che, may have some correspondence with two ancient archaeological sites recently documented by Iida Hiroya of Japan (in personal communication). On the slopes above the well known monastery of rDzu 'phrul Phug there are two sites with significant ruins. Southwest of the monastery at a place called Zhabs mgar mTshams khang (spelling?) are the remains of a complex of all-stone buildings, which include a subterranean room that has its stone roof still intact. Northwest of rDzu 'phrul phug a multi-roomed structure was built at the foot of an escarpment, which also appears to date to pre-Buddhist times. In a side valley northeast of rDzu 'phrul Phug, leading to the formation known as sMan lha Pho brang, there are the ruins of at least one other all-stone building.
8. The *bya ru* (literally: horns of the bird) denotes a type of crown or helmet, possibly of Iranic origins, that was worn by Bon priests and nobility. It would seem to have included appurtenances made of different materials representing the horns of the *khyung*, the king of birds, symbol of sovereignty and superiority. Helmets with iron horns were also used by tribes in Mongolia and Siberia (Heissig 1980: 20).
9. This refers to one of the twin lakes: mTsho Ma pham or La lnga mTsho. Alternatively, "Mu le mtsho yi gling" could be a reference to islands, and would consequently denote the islands of La lnga mTsho (Mu le'i do gling). On two of these islands there are reported

to a community of 3300 *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at the place of Mu le mTsho,[9] in the Zhang zhung locality of Pu mar Hring.[10] Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king sPungs rgyung gyer, holder of the resplendent horns of the bird, based at the castle called sTag chen rNgam pa'i yungs rdzogs,[11] in the Pu mar Hring locality. Also, similarly, the disciple of Dang ba Yid ring, the sage called Gung rum gTsug phud, propagated the [Bon] Doctrine to a great community of 17, 000 *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at Bye ma g.Yung drung tshal,[12] in the Zhang zhung Tsi na'i locality[13] ([now] called Gro shod). Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was King Gu wer nor, holder of the resplendent *ga ljang*[14] horns of the bird, based at the golden castle called Dum pa tshal in Zhang zhung Tsi na'i shod.

Also, similarly, the disciple of Gung rum gTsug phud, the sage called rDzu 'phrul Ye shes, propagated the [Bon] Doctrine to a great community of several thousand *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at the complex of stone houses in La mor, located on the east side of sPos ri Ngad ldan. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king sTag sna gzi brjid, holder of the *khri ldem*[15] iron horns of the bird, based at the castle called sTag sna dBal rDzong, in the middle of the city of sTag sna gling ([now] called Bon ri sTag sna rong), at the foot of sPos ri Ngad ldan, in the Zhang zhung locality of Tsi na'i. Also, similarly, the disciple of rDzu 'phrul Ye shes, the sage called Ye shes Tshul khrims, propagated the [Bon] Doctrine to a community of 1060 *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at bDud rtsi sman nags,[16] in the Zhang zhung locality of Kha yug. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king Sad Hri gyer, holder of the resplendent *Udpal*[17] horns of the bird, based at the molten pig iron castle called Mu rdzong chen po, in the Zhang zhung Kha yug locality. Also, similarly, the disciple of Ye shes Tshul khrims, the sage called g.Yung drung Tshul khrims, propagated the [Bon]

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to be extremely ancient ruins (Bellezza 2001: 24). Photographs of these two islands are found in Swami Pranavananda 1949, nos. 110-113.

10. This is the well known region in extreme southwestern Tibet commonly known as sPu Hrang.
11. This is most probably an alternative name for the fortress best known as sTag lha mKhar located in sPu Hrang. See Bellezza 2001, p. 102.
12. This is the region in the headwaters of the Yar lung gTsang po river. For a pre-Buddhist archaeological site located there see Bellezza 1993.
13. In this work I have underlined letters as a notation designating the inverted Tibetan letters (*log yig*). n, d, and t
14. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, *ga ljang* is the Zhang zhung name for a very precious type of turquoise.
15. The identity of *khri ldem* does not appear to be known.
16. The Grove of Medicinal Nectar.
17. *Udpal* is the blue poppy, but in this context it may describe the color of the *bya ru*.

Doctrine to countless *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at Khyung chen sPungs pa'i ri ([now] called mKhar gdong) in the Zhang zhung court city of Happy Victorious Ones. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king sLas kra Gu ge, holder of the jeweled horns of the bird, based at the White Silver Castle with the molten pig-iron foundation, in the city locality Happy Victorious Ones. Also, similarly, the disciple of g.Yung drung Tshul khrims, the sage known as gTsug phud rGyal ba, propagated the [Bon] doctrine to a community of several thousand *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* at the garden of gSang brag g.Yung drung gtams pa, in the Zhang zhung Ru thog locality. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king Mu mar Thog rgod, holder of the resplendent *Enta*[18] horns of the bird, based at the castle called Zhang zhung Ru thog gNam rDzong. Also, similarly, the disciple of gTsug phud rGyal ba, the sage called Ye shes rGyal ba, propagated the [Bon] Doctrine to a community of 16,000 *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* beside the Ghan dha chen po *mchod rten*, in the city of sTag sna gling located at the foot of Pos ri Ngad ldan. Likewise, at that time, the patron was the king. He was king sTa sna gZi brjid, holder of the *khri ldem* iron horns of the bird, based at the castle called sTag sna dBal gyi rdzong, situated in the middle of the city of sTag gling, at the foot of sPos ri Ngad ldan, in the Zhang zhung locality of Tsi na'i. Also, similarly, the disciple of Ye shes rgyal ba, the sage called dPal gyi dbang phyug, propagated the [Bon] Vinaya Doctrine throughout Tibet.

(L-184; P-IIIa) Name: sMon lam rDzong (Supplication Castle). Location: Dang chung, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county.

East of the ancient retreat caves of gNas kun bzang, beyond a deeply incised valley called Brag li rong, are ancient edifices known locally as sMon lam rDzong 'og ma (lower) and sMon lam rDzong stod ma (upper).[19] Overlooking Dang chung mTsho, these structures are identified by senior Bon po of nearby Dang ra g.Yu mtsho as occupying the heart of a Zhang zhung period site known as sMon lam Brag sa. Local accounts, both Buddhist and Bon po, allege that the all-stone foundations and semi-subterranean chambers (*'og dong*) of sMon lam rDzong 'og ma date to the pre-Buddhist period, while the ruins of sMon lam rDzong 'stod ma in their entirety are thought to have been founded in Zhang zhung times. The Bon text *rDzogs pa chen po lho brag ma'i sngon 'gro'i tshig bshad* records that the secret meditation place of g.Yung drung Rin chen (circa 11th century?) was sMon lam Brag sa.[20] The oral tradition of the site shared by both the region's Buddhists and Bon po, combined with the architectural characteristics of the buildings (such as rounded walls, stone beams and corbels, and semi-subterranean lower rooms), appear to corroborate the Zhang zhung identity of sMon lam rDzong. Nevertheless, the Bon textual reference to the site set in the historical era demonstrates that it was occupied by Bon po many centuries after the fall of Zhang zhung, but it provides us with no clues as to the founding of sMon lam rDzong.

According to oral accounts prevalent at the Dang chung Karma bka' brgyud monastery known as Thub bstan gSang sngags Chos gling, sMon lam rDzong 'og ma (also called dGon pa sMon lam) laid in ruins for some time until one of the Khro bo lamas, members of its reincarnate lineage, reconstructed a three storey superstructure on top of the old foundations.[21] This Buddhist retreat center, after being razed in the Cultural Revolution, was rebuilt in a more rudimentary manner by the 17th titular head of Dang chung monastery, Lha rabs Chos rje bsTan pa rGyal mtshan (who died in 1998). sMon lam rDzong 'og ma however, sees very little contemporary usage. The modern building consists of three small rooms laid out in a U-shaped pattern, which are set on top of the old foundations. These rooms function as a sleeping space (*gzims chung*), kitchen and living quarters, and were built with a roof supported by wooden rafters. The design of the modern additions was strongly influenced by the archaic building plan, as evidenced by the small size and alignment of the rooms, the rounded walls of dependencies, such as the latrine and the exterior landing accessing the *gzims chung*, and in the random rubble construction of the walls. The sMon lam rDzong 'og ma building is completely surrounded by a wall topped with *mani* stones.

There is one entranceway to the ancient basement of sMon lam rDzong 'og ma located on the east side of the structure. The basement (*'og dong*) consists of both an inner and outer chamber; these small fire-blackened, semi-subterranean rooms are oriented in the cardinal directions. They measure 3.3 meters (north to south) by 2.3

18. This is a precious stone similar to sapphire.

19. For my first survey of gNas kun bzang see Bellezza 2000, p. 26; 2001, p. 112-115. Local sources report that although the cave shelters at gNas kun bzang are sometimes referred to as sMon lam Brag sa, this latter name specifically refers to the free-standing buildings to the east. I have also subsequently learned that the formation at gNas kun bzang I referred to as Red Escarpment is actually called dGon pa rNam 'dren. Reportedly, the largest cave shelter located here (I designated it Upper West V in earlier works) was in use as a retreat until the Communist period. On the UTCE a lower group of archaic cave shelters was found at gNas kun bzang, which was not documented on the author's previous Changthang Circuit Expedition (1999). These consist of at least nine caves with wall footings or the remains of retaining walls built around them.

20. This text contains prayers to lineage masters of the sGrags pa skor gsum cycle. Written in 14 small chapters, it was published by the Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre (originally a xylographic sMan ri edition). On the same page (no. 145), it also records that the saints mKhas btsun Shes grub practiced at Dang ra g.Yu bun and Yon tan Senge at Dang ra Khyung rDzong. These personalities were more or less contemporaries of g.Yung drung Rin chen.

21. The first four members of the Dang chung monastery are referred to as the Khro bo lamas: Khro bo (phu) Lo rtsa ba, Khro bo Grags pa Chos bzang, Khro bo gGrub chen mGon po and Khro bo rNam rgyal Grags pa (*Nag chu sa khul* 1993: 584). According to monastic sources, the first Khro bo is thought to have lived a little after the founding of Ser ba monastery in Lhasa (early 15th century), while the fourth Khro bo's life overlapped with the Fifth Dalai Lama. Unfortunately, historical records relating to the monastery were destroyed in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and thus no biographical information is available on these personalities.

meters (east to west) and from floor to ceiling 1.8 to two meters. The partition dividing the *'og dong* into two chambers is a load-bearing wall for the superstructure and supports stone beams about 1.5 meters in length. On the north side of the building, below the kitchen, there is a ruined *'og dong* that has some of its stone corbels in place. What appear to be other structural extensions are found on both the north and east sides of sMon lam rDzong 'og ma, which seem to indicate that the original complex was significantly larger than the subsequent Buddhist hermitage.

sMon lam rDzong stod ma is situated on a crag above its lower counterpart and possesses sweeping views of the Dang chung basin lying a couple hundred meters below it. According to local sources, it was a Zhang zhung period fortress. Aligned in the compass points the main structure of the upper site measures 15 meters (east to west) by 7.5 meters (north to south). Originally at least two storeys high, as evidenced by stone corbels protruding from the walls, parts of the main structure are still over three meters high. Below the main structure, on the southwest side of the crag, there appear to be the remains of other structures.

(L-185; P-IIIb) Name: Gog rtse Khang dmar (Red House Crumbling Top). Location: rDo dmar township, Ru thog county.

Located about ten kilometers northwest of the rDo dmar township headquarters is an archaeological site dominated by a large wall oriented in an east-west direction. This site is situated on the edge of the rDo dmar valley in close proximity to large high quality pastures. The wall measures 16 meters in length, one meter wide, and a maximum of 3.5 meters in height. Above the 65 centimeter to one meter level this wall is constructed of adobe blocks. It appears to have been part of one or two relatively large buildings, the remainder of which have been all but obliterated. Local sources report that other significant buildings also stood here but traces of them have been eradicated. According to the garbled mythology connected to Gog rtse Khang dmar, it functioned as the abode of the Mon and was the residence of the epic heroine A thag Klu mo, besides being a *srid pa chags pa* (primordial) monument. However, the earthen walls and location of Gog rtse Khang dmar in the valley bottom might well indicate that this is a historical era site.

(L-186; P-IIIc; P-IIId; P-IIIe) Name rGyang grags rDo khang. Location: Dar lung valley, above Dar chen, Bar kha township, sPu Hrang county.

In the inner circuit (*nang skor*) of Gangs dkar Ti se, located primarily above the 'Bri gung pa monastery of Gyang grag, are the carcasses of more than 30 all-stone structures. The presence of so many ancient edifices attests to the long-lived religious and cultural importance of Gangs Ti se. Locally called *rdo khang* (stone house), the identity of these ancient structures largely escapes local attention, nor does it seem to be directly addressed in the sacred geographic *gnas bshad* and *dkar chag* literature of Gangs Ti se. According to local sources, these structures were used by meditators of yore, which given their lofty aspect and location, is very plausible. There are important factors that seem to indicate that at least a portion of the *rdo khang* were founded in the pre-Buddhist period: *(1)* the prominent position of rGyang grags in Zhang zhung history; *(2)* the all-stone construction and other archaic design features of the *rdo khang*; *(3)* their extremely altitudinous aspect; and 4) their neglect in the Buddhist oral and textual histories of Gangs Ti se.

rGyang grags occupies a special place of importance in Bon historical conceptions of Zhang zhung. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag's (sLob dpon bsTan 'dzin rNam dag) pilgrimage guide entitled *Bod yul gnas kyi lam yig gsal ba'i dmigs bu* (p. 39), "In front of Gangs Rin po che, at a place now occupied by rGyangs grags monastery, there was in ancient times the capital of the Zhang zhung King of Existence, the holder of the golden horns of the bird, Khri wer La rje. He was king when sTon pa [Shes rab] came to Tibet according to the *Khri rje lung bstan*." Another Bon account of rGyangs grags is found in the *'Dzam gling gangs rgyal ti se'i dkar chag*, which notes that this capital was called rGyang ri g.Yu lo lJon pa'i rDzong mkhar (Walled Mountain Turquoise Leaf Tree Fortress), was located in front of Gangs Rin po che, and is where the three heavenly appointed Zhang zhung kings of existence resided (Norbu and Prats 1989: 71, 127). The names of these kings are Khri wer La rje Gu lang, holder of the golden horns of the bird; Zhung zhag Zil gnon rGyal po rLabs chen, holder of the *khyung* horns of the bird; and Hri do Gyer spungs rGyal po Kang ka, holder of the crystal horns of the bird. The location of these three kings at the beginning of a list of the 18 kings of Zhang zhung, and the fact that the first king was a contemporary of the Bon founder Shes rab, indicates that rGyang grags was the first capital of Zhang zhung. Zhang zhung's second capital Khyung lung dNgul mkhar, is situated 700 meters lower than rGyang grags; an inherently less harsh climate may possibly have been one of the factors in its transfer.

There are other references in the *'Dzam gling gangs rgyal ti se'i dkar chag* to the importance of Gangs Ti se region during the reign of the first Zhang zhung king:[22]

In the middle of Zhang zhung, which is like a thousand-petal golden flower, there is Gang rin po che. In front of it, at the base of Mount sPos ri Ngad ldan, there is Lake Mu le khyud (mTsho Ma pham) and on its shore [sTon pa] appeared. The Zhang zhung king of existence Khri wer la rje Gu lang, the holder of the golden horns of the bird, and all other living beings were blessed with the divine apportionment [of sTon pa]. In particular, the *gsas khang* (temple) Nor bu sPungs rtsig, as well as others, that were established in front of the great snow mountain (Gangs Ti se), in the middle of the southern continent, received the manifold blessings and ministrations [of sTon pa].

In the same text it records that King Khri wer was the prime benefactor of the founder of the Bon religion. This account helps to explain why Gangs Ti se, the residence of the first Zhang zhung king is held in such high esteem by the Bon po and why it is thought to have been the religious hub of Zhang zhung:[23]

22. No. 555: zhang zhung yul gyi dbus gser gyi pad ma stong ldan lta bu'i dbus dkyil / gangs ri chen po'i mdun drung / ri spos ri ngad ldan gyi rtsab / mtsho mu le khyud kyi 'gram du bab cing / zhang zhung srid pa'i rgyal po khri wer la rje gu lang gser gyi bya ru can sogs / 'gro ba kun gyi lha skal du bab cing byin gyis rlabs pa dang / khyad par lho 'dzam bu gling gi dbus / gangs ri chen po'i mdun zhol du / gsas khang nor bu spungs rtsig bzhengs pa la sogs byin gyis labs pa tshul mang du yod pa'o /.

23. No. 565: de tshe lha klu mi sogs kun 'dus te / de'i nang khyab (= khyad) par zhang zhung srid pa'i rgyal / khri wer gser gyi bya ru can zhes des / gser sogs rin chen sna

When [sTon pa] came all the *lha*, *klu*, people and others convened. Most notably, the Zhang zhung king of existence called Khri wer, holder of the golden horns of the bird, made offerings of gold and other things, and five types of precious substances. Then supplicating in a reverential manner he requested [sTon pa] that the exoteric doctrine of the gYung drung might flourish and especially, that the secret g.Yung drung Bon teachings for the cleansing of sin and the consummation of accumulation[24] be bestowed on him and the others [present]. sTon pa orally transmitted the Bon teachings of *Khri rje lung bstan*, a sutra in 30 parts, to completion.

The *Khri rje lung bstan* contains a long account attributed to the founder of the Bon religion sTon pa that describes the past life history of the first king of Zhang zhung Khri wer La rje.[25] The account is fabulous and moralistic and is replete with historical period pieties. It must therefore be categorized as a myth, lending color to the first king of Zhang zhung but little substance. The tale begins at gNas ri Mu gum, where sTon pa is residing with a large circle of disciples. In order to expound the doctrine of reincarnation, and how good and bad activities carry on from lifetime to lifetime, he tells his disciples the following story: "It so passed that in the distant past in a locale in Zhang zhung called 'Jams mrdzes a king named Kun la sKyab pa'i mgon and his queen gDug rtsug Dug skyug ma both gave birth to two sons. The elder son, called Dal 'byor sKyes zhes, wanted all sentient beings to be happy and at peace. However, the younger brother, Drag rtsub skyes, had a character that was diametrically opposite, and he engaged in destroying and making sentient beings miserable. When the two sons grew up they began to fight over their parents' wealth and possessions. The object most in contention was a peerless jewel owned by their father, Kun la sKyab pa'i mgon. This wish-fulfilling jewel was kept specially wrapped on an altar and the king honored and worshipped it. The tension between the two sons only grew when the king announced that whoever should possess this jewel would rule over his kingdom."

"Due to his attachment, the king was unable to choose between his two sons, so summoned a seer named bDen par sMra ba, who proceeded to examine the boys. The seer could clearly tell that the elder son was morally superior and announced this as diplomatically as possible to avoid the wrath of the younger brother. As a result of this

tshogs mchod pa phul / gus pa'i tshul gyis zhus sam gsol ba btab / spyi ru g.yung drung bstan pa dar ba dang / sgos su bdag gzhan tshogs rdzogs sgrib sbyang ba'i / g.yung drung gsang ba'i bon spyod gnang par zhus / ston pas zhal nas khri rje lung bstan pa'i / bon spyod mdo sde sum cu rdzogs par gsungs /.

24. In the Bon doctrine these are of two types: accumulation of the cause of merits (*rgyu bsod nams tshogs*), and accumulation of the fruits of wisdom (*'bre bu ye shes kyi tshogs*). These denote the two types of benefits and insights instrumental in the achievement of enlightenment.

25. *Khri rje lung bstan gyi mdo* (nos. 16-66), Delhi edition. Published by bSod nams rGyal mtshan.

examination, the kingdom was given to the older son. In rage over his fate, the younger brother threatened to kill his parents and brother if he was not given the jewel. Even though the older brother offered to share it with him the younger son refused to be appeased and left the kingdom. His mother, who was both strongly attached and afraid of Drag rtsub skyes, accompanied him into exile. The younger brother and mother fled to the Zhang zhung country of sMad 'grem Ne kha and became servants of its evil king, Log pa'i stobs can. Meanwhile, Dal 'byor sKyes zhes and his father received teachings from the gShen Don la Rab brtson. Using sorcery the mother and younger brother tried to harm them, but they were unsuccessful because of the wish-fulfilling jewel in their possession. The younger brother expressed a desire to his teacher, gSal ba rGod 'bar, that, as he had been unsuccessful in harming his father and older brother in this lifetime, he should come back in the next life and finish the job. The virtuous older brother wished that when he was reborn he could again see his parents."

"In the next life the older brother Dal 'byor sKyes zhes, was reborn in the country called Ga gon[26] as Khri 'dus Lam pa to the King of Zhang zhung, Khri wer La rje, and his wife, Khri snyan Za zu, who were the same parents he had in his previous life. The evil younger brother, Drag rtsub skyes, was also reborn as Srin po Ka la ra sa but this time his parents were the demons, King Za byed Me ka and Srin mo Khrag 'thung Me 'bar. When Srin po Ka la ra sa tried to kill his former brother he was slain and guided to the realm of the gods by sTag lha Me 'bar, a reincarnation of Don la Rab brtson, Khri 'dus Lam pa's teacher in his previous lifetime. After sTon pa revealed the true identity of the protagonists in the story, Khri snyan Za zu dies in grief realizing, that her former younger son was an attempted murderer. Then King Khri wer La rje, his son Khri 'dus Lam pa, their minister dGa' ba rgyas, and their priest, sTag lha Me 'bar, go on to receive teachings from sTon pa. Afterwards they went to a place called Brag khri zur mDung rtse and obtained enlightenment."

As we can see from the Bon quasi-historical and legendary accounts, Gangs Ti se and its environs were the site of significant activity and settlement in the pre-Buddhist period. However, without a sound chronology there is no way to determine if these accounts are related to the archaeological evidence found at rGyang grags and other sites at Gangs Ti se. The design of the *rdo khang* certainly alludes to the pre-Buddhist phase of civilization in Upper Tibet, but their use probably extended well into the Buddhist period.[27] As I have consistently maintained, such habitations without archaeometric data must be viewed in an inclusive cultural and temporal context, and not solely in a Zhang zhung-Mon cultural perspective. Consequently, as in other places in Upper Tibet,

26. Probably located somewhere near Gangs Ti se.

27. In the legendary 11th century CE contest at Ti se between Mi la ras pa and Na ro Bon chung, the two protagonists compete to build a house to shelter from the rain. In the process the Bon po shapes two roof slabs, one of which is described as being as large as the body of an eight year old child. See Garma C.C. Chang 1962, pp. 219, 220. This account would certainly seem to indicate that stone roof constructions were known to both the Buddhists and Bon po during the *bstan pa phyi dar* in far western Tibet.

rdo khang may have been constructed or rebuilt at Gangs Ti se as late as the 13th century CE. By maintaining an encompassing historical view of the *rdo khang* we can conceive of them as hosting Buddhist practitioners throughout the first[28] and second diffusions of Buddhism.[29] The centrality of Gangs Rin po che to Buddhist sacred territorial notions supports such an assumption as well.

In the oral tradition of nearby rGyang grags monastery, in the vicinity of the *rdo khang* (also called *sgrub khang*), the renowned 'Bri gung pa saint sPyon snga Gling pa is supposed to have stayed, leaving his *zhabs rjes* (footprint) in stone.[30] At this stage in

28. As for the early period of Buddhism at Gangs Ti se, we find the following account in the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* by sBa gSal snang *et al.*(Shes rig par khang, Dharamsala, 1968), p. 4, 5 : "... Both Bran ka Mu le Ko sha and gNyags dzanya' na Ku ma ra were sent to India [by King Khri srong lDe btsan] to search for Buddhist religious teachings (*chos*). [En route] they heard that the two scholars, Sangs rgyas gSang ba and Sangs rgyas Zhi ba, were meditating at Gangs Ti se. They invited these two scholars [to meet the King] but they were unable to come, so in kind regard two sutras they knew by heart *sDe las rnam par* and *gSer 'od dam pa* [were presented to the King's men] to be conveyed as sacred offerings to the King" (bran ka mu le ko sha dang / gnyags dzanya' na ku ma ra gnyis rgya gar du chos 'tshol du btang bas / ban*d*i ta sangs rgyas gsang ba dang / sangs rgyas zhi ba gnyis gangs ti se la bsgom mo zhes thos te / de gnyis spyon drangs pas spyan ma 'drongs te de gnyis kyi thugs la mdo sde las rnam par 'byed pa dang / gser 'od dam pa'i mdo gnas pa de gnyis spyon drangs nas rgyal po'i mchod gnas su phul).
29. However, it was not until later that personalities of the 'Bri gung pa and Tshal pa subsects began to reach Ti se, in the 1190s. In the early 12th century CE they became firmly entrenched in the region, with patronage from the kings of Gu ge and Pu Hrang. Ghu ya sGang pa founded rGyang grags monastery after dislodging 'Brug pa meditators, circa 1215. rGyang grags became the headquarters of a number of 'Bri gung pa monasteries in far western Tibet. In 1215, Ghu ya sGang pa was appointed *rdor 'dzin* (religious administrator), a post he held until 1239. He was succeeded by Nyi ma Gung pa, who himself was succeeded by Kun dga' rDo rje. The fourth and final *rdor 'dzin* was Dar ma rGyal mtshan, who occupied the post in 1278, when the region was taken over by the Sa skya pa, spelling the end of 'Bri gung political preeminence. However, the bKa' brgyud pa sects remained the undisputed stewards of holy places in the Ti se region until the arrival of disciples of Tsong kha pa in the first quarter of the 15th century. See Vitali 1996, p. 90, 371-373, 380, 391, 394, 395, 406, 407, 409-414, 421, 422. Two photographs of rGyang rgrags taken in the 1930s are found in Tucci 1937, opp. p. 84.
30. The founding of rGyang grags monastery is related in the 'Bri gung *Ti se'i gnas bshad* (no. 162): "Going up the small valley behind Shel 'dra there is a formation resembling a meditation hat below which 'Bri gung sKyob pa Rin po che commanded *rdor 'dzin* Ghu ya sGang pa to build rGyang grags monastery. Here there was the cave known as Lung bstan and many other meditation caves of the various 'Bri gung pa hermits" (shel 'dra'i rgyab kyi lung pa chung du zhig tu ya tshad phyin pa na brag ri sgom zhwa dang 'dra ba'i 'og na rdor 'dzin ghu ya sgang pa la 'bri gung skyob pa rin po ches rgyang grags dgon pa thob cig ces lung btsan pa'i lung bstan phug ces pa sogs 'bri gung pa'i ri pa rnams kyi sgrub phug mang du yod). The many caves noted in the account are actually

the study of the cultural history and archaeology of the region, we have no way to gauge which *rdo khang* may have been abandoned with the collapse of Zhang zhung and which may have been used or built afterwards. This is especially true in the absence of literary histories or local legends connected to the founding of the site. What can be clearly established is that the *rdo khang* of rGyang grags, with their all-stone construction, small irregularly-shaped rooms and semi-subterranean aspect, recalls those found at Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, bKra ri gNam mtsho, or a number of other locations that have been surveyed by the author. In local oral histories, the *rdo khang* at most other sites are attributed to the early Bon po and the Mon pa. Therefore on typological grounds, at least in the earliest cultural horizon, the rGyang grags *rdo khang*, constructed precisely in the same fashion as their far-ranging counterparts, likewise probably belong to the pre-Buddhist milieu.

Environmental factors also support a pre-Buddhist origin for the *rdo khang* of rGyang grags. These buildings, located above rGyang rgrags monastery, are found to an elevation of 5400 meters, making them the highest example of this typology I have recorded to date. At 5100 meters, rGyang grags dGon pa is one of the very highest monasteries in all of Tibet and is a very difficult place to live as averred by resident monks. The *rdo khang* situated upwards of 300 meters above the monastery pose that much more of an environmental challenge, and while individual Buddhist yogins certainly lived at these heights, there is no persuasive evidence for the founding of an extensive facility in a climatic zone that appears to have been uniformly abandoned in the historical period. To the contrary, the establishment and maintenance of these highly refined structures at great elevations indicate that their origin can be traced to an earlier epoch, when the climate of the region was more amenable to their foundation.

The absence of explicit references to the *rdo khang* in the 'Bri gung *Ti se'i gnas bshad* is another clue suggesting pre-Buddhist origins. Similarly, it seems out of character that the senior 'Brug pa and 'Bri gung pa *sngags pa* from the region have not preserved a specific oral tradition regarding the founding of the *rdo khang,* but this appears to be the case, as several interviews conducted with them has shown. The mute textual record in the *Ti se'i gnas bshad* is aberrant in that the *rdo khang* taken as an aggregate represent

situated east and west of rGyangs grags. The cave now identified as Lung bstan Phug is found east of the Se lung valley. In the same text we read (no. 117): "It is said that the central monastery (*gtsug lag khang*), named according to the lama's prophecy, which became known as rGyang grags monastery, whose essence is constituted by the unborn, self-manifested white letter A, was established on a mountain inside the Dar valley, a ridge-top resembling a viper racing downwards, on the west [side] of Gangs Ti se." (ti se'i nub dar lung che ba'i nang gi ri gdong dug sbrul thur du rgyug pa 'dra ba'i ze ba'i steng / skye med A dkar rang byon snying por tshud pa'i gtsug lag khang brtsigs shing ming yang bla mas lung btsan rgyang grags dgon pa zhes grags pa byung skad). In another account the text relates that (nos. 118, 119) after receiving Vajrayana teachings and a bDe mchog initiation from 'Bri gung Gling pa, the King of sPu Hrang, Jo bo A tig sman, gifted him seven places (named in text) and their subjects for the establishment of rGyang rgags monastery.

a considerably larger monumental presence than all six contemporary monasteries at Gangs Rin po che combined. The sketchy historical details suggest that there was not a sufficient Buddhist presence at rGyang grags until the advent of 'Bri gung pa power in the early 13th century to undertake such large building projects. However, these projects appear to have been confined to the construction of the monastery and the residence of the religious administrator, and not to have included the development of larger facilities as represented by the all-stone complexes at rGyang grags and other places around Gangs Ti se. Moreover, the 'Bri gung period of ascendancy at Gangs Ti se only lasted a little more than 60 years, hardly enough time for small bands of ascetics to construct the formidable infrastructure of *rdo khang*. The *Ti se'i gnas bshad* documents that 500 monks did indeed come to the Dar valley, but their occupation of caves and "bird shelters" (a euphemism for the Bon po *rdo khang*?) was for the most part temporary. According to the oral tradition of rGyang grags monastery, they then dispersed to various places in extreme southwestern Tibet, including sPu Hrang and Bya ri gTsug ldan. In the text we read (no. 118)[31]: "... 'Bri gung sPyan snga Shes rab 'Byung gnas, also known as 'Bri gung Gling pa Shes grags pa, with his entourage of 500 monks stayed in the country of bird shelters[32] and in caves and other [places] in the upper part of the Dar valley. As a result, they obtained the immeasurable qualities of realization."

The scrupulous avoidance in Buddhist references to Gangs Ti se of anything to do with the achievements of the Bon po who came before them, beyond the apocryphal contest between Mi la ras pa and Na ro Bon chung, amounts to a suppression of the early history of Gangs Rin po che. This contest itself was nothing more than a stratagem to legitimize Buddhist control of the holy mountain.[33] The mute testimony of Buddhist oral and textual histories, when viewed with the environmental and typological evidence is sufficiently compelling to provisionally attribute the founding of the *rdo khang* of rGyang grags to the Zhang zhung-Mon cultural milieu.

The *rdo khang* are all-stone structures (now often hosting orange climax lichens), which in certain examples are relatively well preserved permitting an analysis of their architectural characteristics. Built primarily of metamorphic rock but also sandstone and conglomerate, the south facing *rdo khang* range in size from four meters by 2.75 meters to eight meters by nine meters (excluding the large complex situated below rGyang grags monastery). These structures with their 70 centimeter to one meter thick walls, heavy buttressing and semi-subterranean aspect, were built to withstand the severe high elevation conditions and perhaps for centuries of usage. The roofs of the *rdo khang* were constructed with stone slabs up to two meters in length that rested upon beams supported by corbels and the buttressed walls. The roof beams are commonly one meter to 1.5 meter in length, with the longest specimens attaining two meters.

31. ... 'Bri gung pa spyan snga shes rab 'byung gnas sam 'bri gung gling pa zhes grags pa de nyid 'khor rab byung lnga brgya dang bcas pa byon shing bzhugs yul bya skyibs dang / dar lung gi phu'i sgrub phug sogs su bzhugs pas rtogs pa'i yon tan dpag tu med pa brnyes /.

32. Bya skyibs usually denotes overhangs and clefts in rocks where both men and animals can find shelter from the elements.

33. This encounter between the protagonists of the two religions is characterized by mutual rivalry, mistrust and bigotry. After Mi la ras pa defeats and humiliates the Bon po in various acts of sorcery, the adherents of the Bon religion are forced to vacate Gangs Ti se and take up residence at a mountain to the east, although they are permitted to visit on pilgrimage. See Garma C.C. Chang 1962, pp. 215-225.

Typically, there are two or three rows of two or three small, windowless rooms in each of the structures. The rear / upper / north rooms of the edifices were often partially built into the slope. Some of the rooms are irregularly-shaped and many of them have niches in the walls (*bang khung*). The presence of a relatively large number of rooms in the *rdo khang* raises questions as to how many people occupied each one. Surely, a lone meditator would not require so many compartments. The rooms average four square meters or less, which must have dictated a usage of space quite different from more modern buildings. Certain cells must have been used for sleeping, others for cooking and various domestic activities. In none of the *rdo khang* is there structural evidence of a main or central room. The two or three rows of rooms in each structure presuppose a decentralized internal ecology, as might be expected of buildings whose function was serious religious practice. Ceilings, like in *rdo khang* found in other places in Upper Tibet, are low (two meters or less in height), thus the rooms would have been relatively easy to heat. The tiny entranceways (around one meter in height), with their stone lintels and jambs, is another characteristic feature of this archaeological typology.

On the slope directly above rGyang grags monastery there are at least seven or eight foundations of *mtshams khang* (meditation houses), said to have been used by 'Bri gung pa practitioners. The well built foundations of these structures measure around five meters by six meters. These south facing meditational structures disappeared before the Communist period. The more enigmatic *rdo khang* are spread over a wide area primarily on the slopes above the *mtshams khang*. I have divided them into groups according to relative geographic placement: Upper East Ridge (seven specimens), Upper West ridge (18 specimens), East Valley (seven specimens), and Lower rGyang grags (three specimens). The Upper East Ridge specimens are situated east of the stream that runs along the east side of rGyang grags monastery (East Valley). The Upper West Ridge specimens are situated on the slopes above rGyang grags monastery. The East Valley *rdo khang* are found in the valley that separates the Upper West Ridge from the Upper East Ridge. This valley forms an upper affluent of the Dar lung chu, which runs below rGyang grags monastery. The middle elevation *rdo khang* enjoy panoramic views of La lnga mTsho, while the vistas of the highest specimens also include mTsho Ma pham.

In addition to the four groups enumerated above, there are the remains of two *rdo khang* situated on top of Lha dar sgang, the pass separating the Dar valley of rGyangs grags from the Lha valley of Se lung monastery. These two specimens are in direct view of the south face of Gangs Ti se. There is also one *rdo khang* reduced to fragmentary wall footings below the east side of Lha dar sgang. Additionally, there is at least one *rdo khang* located on a ridge west of the Se lung valley that I did not visit.

Upper East Ridge

UE-I : six meters by five meters. Located on top of a cliff directly above EV-V. The west wall is up to 1.8 meters in height and the exterior northwest corner of the structure reaches a maximum height of two meters. Interior walls are less than one meter in height.

UE-II : six meters by eight meters. Located on the ridge-line above UE-I. It is divided by the remains of a wall running east and west into two equal halves. Entrances to both sections are in the south. The forward (south) wall is up to 1.5 meters in height, while the rear wall is built into the upper slope. The rear wall is visible to a depth of one meter despite the in-filling of the structure. Two *in situ* roof corbels rest on the forward wall. There is one niche built into the rear east wall.

UE-III : six meters by 7.5 meters. Located higher up the slope. This *rdo khang* has been largely obliterated.

UE-IV : 7.5 meters by 7.5 meters. Located higher on the East Ridge. Like other large *rdo khang* at rGyang grags, it was divided into three east-west running sections (forward, middle and rear), although most of the room partitions have been destroyed. The tripartite division of the building provided ample support for the stone roof. Only three corbels remain *in situ*.

UE-V : eight meters by nine meters. This is the highest *rdo khang* on the East Ridge (elevation 5350 meters). It was also divided into three sections, each probably containing three rooms. The forward wall is up to 1.5 meters in height but much of the east half of the structure has been obliterated. In the rear west room a couple of corbels are in place.

UE-VI : 6.5 meters by seven meters. This specimen is located at a much lower elevation in a fold in the East Ridge. The forward half of the *rdo khang* has completely collapsed but the rear section, containing three rooms, is sufficiently intact to have part of its roof intact. Access to the rear of the structure is through an enterclose in the central rear room. This entrance, built in the central partition wall (highest point: 1.7 meters), is 1.1 meters in height and 80 centimeters in width. From the central rear room, entrances, also with their lintels intact, lead off to the larger east and west rooms. These inner entrances are the same height but only 60 centimeters in width.

UE-VII : located on the prow of the East Ridge opposite rGyang grags monastery. This average sized specimen has been heavily damaged and only very fragmentary walls remain.

Upper West Ridge

UW-I : heavily disintegrated, elevations to 50 centimeters. Located immediately above the ruined rGyang grags *mtshams khang*.

UW-II : six meters by 7.5 meters. Located up the West Ridge from UW-I. Standing walls up to 1.5 meters have survived, as have niches built into the east and north walls. This *rdo khang* was divided into forward (lower) and rear (upper sections), the latter containing two rooms.

UW-III : 6.5 meters by five meters. This structure is situated in a ravine that forms the headwaters of the stream that runs along the west side of the West Ridge and rGyang grags monastery. This specimen was also partitioned in two halves to accommodate the roof beams that lay scattered on the site. Walls up to 1.4 meters in height and three niches have endured.

UW-IV : four meters by five meters. Situated in the ravine above UW-III. Some beams and slabs are in place, confirming that this building was constructed with an all-stone roof. Walls are a maximum of 1.7 meters in height.

UW-V : five meters by five meters. Located a few tens of meters east of UW-IV on the West Ridge. This structure has been leveled to its wall footings.

UW-VI : 4.5 meters by 7.5 meters. Situated higher up the West Ridge. The forward wall of this *rdo khang* is still up to 2.5 meters in height. The west side of this structure is relatively well preserved and contains three rooms arrayed in a north to south direction. The central west and southwest rooms each have two roof beams straddling the walls. Corbels are still in place in the northwest room. The east side of this *rdo khang* has been mostly leveled. The rear semi-subterranean wall has two niches built into it.

UW-VII : this specimen has been nearly totally obliterated.

UW-VIII : four meters by eight meters. Located above the ravine a little west of the Upper West ridge. At 5400 meters this is the highest *rdo khang* at rGyang grags. Much of the forward section of this structure has been destroyed save for the west room, which has wall segments up to 1.5 meters in height. In the rear two or three rooms several roof beams have survived in place.

UW-IX : 4.5 by six meters. Situated below UW-VIII on the west side of the ravine. In the rear west room the roof is partially intact. Three niches were constructed in the east wall.

UW-X : nine meters by 4.5 meters. Located on a cliff edge above the ravine. Walls up to one meter in height have persisted.

UW-XI : five meters by 5.5 meters. Located west of UW-X, on the rim of the cliff. Walls up to 1.2 meters in height have endured in this carcass.

UW-XII : six meters by seven meters. Located a little west of UW-XI, on the rim of the cliff. This is among the best preserved *rdo khang* at rGyang grags. Standing walls still reach a maximum height of 2.5 meters. The roof over the rear central and west rooms is completely intact, while it has partially survived on the rear east room. The exterior entrance is on the east side of the building and measures 1.1 meters in height and one meter wide. Internal doorways are considerably narrower. The forward east room with its fully intact stone roof might have functioned as a lavatory as evidenced by a hole in the floor.

UW-XIII : seven meters (north to south). Located west of UW-XII. It was built into the side of the same cliff while most of the *rdo khang* were free standing buildings. There are three west rooms and probably as many in the east half of the structure. The roof over the west rooms is largely integral, as it is on the northeast room. Much of the rest of the east half of the structure has been obliterated.

UW-XIV : five meters by five meters. This is the most westerly *rdo khang* at rGyang

grags and it was also built into the side of the cliff. The roof of the very small rear west room is *in situ,* as are several other roof beams.

UW-XV : six meters by five meters with possible extensions in the east. Located on a slope a little east of UW-VI. It was constructed on a rock outcrop giving the structure a high profile. The stone roof is partially intact in the rear west room.

UW-XVI : six meters by nine meters. Located directly below UW-XV. This *rdo khang* also sits prominently on top of a rock outcrop. The forward (east) wall is up to 3.2 meters in height, the tallest wall segment still surviving in the *rdo khang* of rGyang grags. The exterior rear wall is only one meter in height, as much of this section of the building was built into the slope. This relatively large building had three rows of rooms probably numbering three in each. The roof over the rear rooms is partially intact and many corbels have survived *in situ* along the west wall. The forward and central rooms have been largely decimated.

UW-XVII : located at the base of the cliff on which UW-X to UW-XIV are located. This specimen was not visited on the UTCE.

UW-XVIII : located in the small valley west of the Upper West ridge. Also not visited.

East Valley

EV-I : five meters by six meters. Located in the narrow valley east of rGyang grags monastery at an elevation somewhat higher than the monastery. Contained rows of forward and rear rooms. Two corbels are *in situ* on the rear wall, which attains a maximum height of one meter above the slope.

EV-II : 6.5 meters by five meters. Located a little up valley from EV-I. Walls in this structure have been reduced to 1.2 meters or less in height. Several roof beams are *in situ* in the two rear rooms.

EV-III : 5.5 meters by four meters. Located a few meters up valley from EV-II. This building has been reduced to its wall footings.

EV-IV : six meters by 7.5 meters. Located further up the East Valley. The lintel over the entrance connecting the forward and rear rows of rooms is intact. In an east room several roof beams are *in situ*.

EV-V : six meters by 4.5 meters. Located further up the East Valley from EV-IV. Much of this structure has been effaced, except for its north and west wall footings.

EV-VI : four meters by 2.75 meters. Situated at the head of the East Valley on the edge of a cliff, directly below or to the south of UW-XV and UW-XVI. This *rdo khang* has been mostly destroyed, although a few standing wall segments remain.

EV-VII : 3.5 meters by 4.5 meters. Located on the same cliff edge as EV-VI, in close proximity. The forward wall reaches a height of 1.5 meters and one roof slab has survived in place on the rear wall and one on the west wall.

Lower rGyang grags

Main Group: ten meters (north to south) by 45 meters (east to west). This large group of ruined buildings is located on the far side of the stream course that flows east of rGyang grags monastery. Built on top of a small hill, it is situated at a slightly lower

elevation than the monastery. The placement of this group of ruins closely coincides with a ruined fort mentioned in the 'Bri gung pa *Ti se'i gnas bshad*. The passage reads "Below the west side of the Gang Ti se peak, east of rGyang grags monastery, on top of a small hill in view of the mountain supporting the monks quarters, is a dilapidated fortress, which was renowned as the residence of the local religious administrator (*rdor 'dzin*) Ghu ya sGang pa."[34]

The Main Group of Lower rGyang grags can be divided into East, Central and West complexes. The East complex consists of structures that had relatively large rooms, and consequently it would not have had a stone roof. Walls in this structure are upwards of 1.8 meters in height. A gap of nine meters separates the East complex from the Central complex. The isolation of the East complex and the fact that it is not an all-stone construction suggests that this may have been the actual residence of Ghu ya sGang pa. The morphology of the more fragmentary Central complex with its many small rooms, some with a semi-subterranean aspect and all-stone construction, contrasts with the East complex. These differences seem to indicate that the site underwent various chronological phases of development. Several stone roof corbels and beams in the Central complex are *in situ*. Remaining walls in the Central complex are one meter or less in height, except in a building on the northwest side of the complex where they reach 1.8 meters. The West complex was built on the highest part of the hilltop. A revetment up to three meters in height has survived around the complex, making this the most striking part of the Main Group. One room in the west section still has a fully integral stone roof. Its interior dimensions are 1.65 meters by 1.65 meters (plus the 75 centimeter deep doorway extension), while its exterior dimensions are three meters by three meters. These relative dimensions illustrate how massive the wall construction of these types of structures is. The entranceway to this room is 1.1 meters in height and 70 centimeters

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34. No. 156: thog mar ti se'i nub phyogs rgyang grags dgon gyi shar da lha grwa tshang gi rgyab ri de'u'i steng gi mkhar gog 'di ni 'rdor 'dzin ghu ya sgang pa'i gzims khang du grags /. The same text informs us that east of Ghu ya sGang pa's fortress, at a place called Me long steng, there is the *sgrub khang* (meditation house) and *sgrub chu* (spiritually empowered water) of the 'Bri gung pa *siddha* Ri pa Nag po (Huber and Tsepak Rigzin date him to the 13th century). East of this location, at the Ghu ya sGang pa formation, the *dor 'dzin's sgrub khang* and *sgrub chu* (which is like milk) are found (nos. 156,157). See Huber and Tsepak Rigzin 1999, p. 129 for their translation of these same passages. The placement of these two aforementioned *sgrub khang* does not match the placement of the *mtshams khang* of rGyang grags monastery, let alone the *rdo khang*. Moreover, they document a prominent but relatively short-lived occupation of the rGyang grags area by the 'Bri gung pa. The avoidance of any reference in the *Ti se'i gnas bshad* to the *rdo khang,* despite mentioning 'Bri gung pa Gling pa's meditation cave and the caves of many other unnamed 'Bri gung pa practitioners (nos. 157), seems in itself telling. In fact, there are very few caves in the close proximity of rGyang grags, most (including that of Ri pa Nag po) being situated to the east near the Sangs rgyas bZhugs khri formation or on the route to rDzu 'phrul Phug monastery.

in width. Other buildings in the West complex have not fared as well and are now very fragmentary.

The size of the Main Group ruins may make it a candidate for the residence of the Zhang zhung King of existence, Khri wer, but this distinction is more likely held by the rGyang grags hill. This larger and higher hill, with streams flowing around both sides, has the kind of geomantic endowment that would have made it a focus of settlement in the Zhang zhung period, just as it has been in the Buddhist period.

LG-I : 5.5 meters by 4.5 meters. Located in the East Valley immediately below the Main Group. The north side of the building has been leveled to its footings, but elsewhere walls up to one meter in height remain. In the southeast room a couple of roof braces still sit upon the walls.

LG-II : six meters by nine meters. Located a little below LG-I. Exterior walls in this structure reach 1.8 meters but no roof appurtenances are *in situ*.

Lha dar sgang

LDG-I : six meters by seven meters. Located on top of the pass dividing the Dar lung and Se lung valleys. The north half of this *rdo khang* had two rooms, while the southern part of the structure is too disintegrated to recognize the ground plan.

LDG-II : 7.5 meters by ten meters. Situated about six meters downhill (southeast) of LDG-I. Elevations in this structure still attain 1.5 meters. In the semi-subterranean rear of *the rdo khang* several corbels still rest above what were three rooms. The lintel in the doorway between the central rear and west rear rooms is partially intact.

(L-187; P-IIIf) Name: Se lung rDo khang. Location upper Se lung valley, Bar kha township, sPu Hrang county. In the valley flowing beneath the Shel 'dra escarpment are the carcasses of at least four all-stone *rdo khang* (stone houses).[35] These are of the same style and type of construction as those found at rGyang grags and other locations around Gangs Ti se.

What I have designated Upper Se lung I (USL-I) *rdo khang* seems to measure nine meters by six meters (elevation 5300 meters). Located on the right side of the valley upstream of Shel 'dra, much of this structure has collapsed into the talus-strewn slope. There appear to have been three semi-subterranean rooms along the rear of the structure; the two wall partitions between these rooms are partially integral. In the rear central and rear west rooms niches were built into the walls. Two roof corbels are still *in situ*. There was also at least one tier of forward rooms in this structure.

35. In the *Ti se'i gnas bshad* the following reference to constructions in the upper Se lung valley is found (no. 158): " Below the formation in front of Shel 'dra are many *sgrub khang* of great Bri gung pa meditators, including that of Siddha Senge Ye shes and others (shel 'dra'i mdun gyi brag 'og tu grub thob seng ge ye shes sogs 'bri gung pa'i sgom chen rnams kyi sgrub khang mang du yod). Huber and Tsepak Rigzin, in their translation of the same passage, place Senge Ye shes in the 13th century (1999: 129). While this brief reference provides no architectural details of the *sgrub khang*, it does in general terms describe the location of the Se lung *rdo khang*. If these structures were indeed intended by this reference, this serves as confirmation that this type of building was used in the area as late as the 13th century.

USL-II is perched on a shelf on the opposite side of the valley and measures six meters by four meters. Walls have been reduced to 1.2 meters or less in height, and none of the roof beams or sheathing are *in situ*. USL-II, like its down valley counterparts, lies in view of the Gangs Ti se massif. USL-III is situated further down valley on the same side of the watercourse as USL-II. Measuring 7.5 meters by 8.5 meters with its carcass rising to 1.7 meters in height, it seems to have contained two rows of rooms numbering three in each. In the northwest room the roof is partially intact, and in the central west room there are still two roof beams adhering to the tops of the walls. In the southwest room a roof slab that measures 1.85 meters by 85 centimeters is *in situ*, as is a single roof beam. USL-IV sits on the right side of the valley but very little of it remains. It was around the same size as its counterparts. Reportedly, there are one or two *rdo khang* in the Se lung valley that I did not have the opportunity to survey.

Type-IV: Remains of sedentary villages

All throughout Upper Tibet there are groups of nucleated ruins situated in more open terrain that appear to be vestiges of sedentary settlements. These are often said by local sources to be the habitations of the Mon. However, they cannot usually be identified by the extant elevations, which are often highly fragmentary and consequently the oral histories are unverifiable at this time. Some of these so called villages were probably ancient religious centers, and structural detritus at other locations may represent elaborate funerary superstructures. However, clear evidence of domiciles at places such as bKra ri gNam mtsho (Bellezza 2001: addendum) indicate that a small segment of the pre-Buddhist population did in fact reside in permanent dwellings. Where these are relatively well preserved, buildings are completely made of stone and are very similar in style and in building technique to the Zhang zhung-Mon fortress and temple typologies. This, of course, indicates close cultural and chronological correspondences between the typologies. The positive identification and extent of sites with the sedentary settlement attribution will not be known until comprehensive archaeological excavations are carried out.

(L-188;) Name: Khri gzhung (Middle Seat). Location: Chu lcam dmar valley, A zur township, Nyi ma county.[1]

Khri gzhung, with its high volume springs and sheltering limestone hill, is an ideal location for settlement. However, it has lain abandoned for a very long period of time. According to local sources, Khri gzhung was a Mon habitation, although one better educated official in A zur township expressly connected it to the Zhang zhung period and the ancient Bon po. The *mani* mantra has been carved in large letters into the soft limestone at various places, in an apparent attempt to place this ancient site under the auspices of Buddhism. All ruins at Khri gzhung are accessible along trails that were cut into the limestone formation, so that one does not have to descend to the valley below. This fact, and the towering cliffs above the settlement, suggest that it was designed with a defensive purpose in mind. (L-189; P-IVa)

The residuum of the purported ancient settlement of Khri ghung is concentrated in a south facing amphitheater and consists of a fairly dense agglomeration of poorly

1. No photographs of this site are available.

preserved foundations covering an area of approximately 1000 square meters. On the outward-most extension of the west rim of the amphitheater is what remains of a two-tiered structure aligned in the cardinal directions, measuring 6.5 meters by six meters with walls up to 1.8 meters in height (elevation 4770 meters). The west rim of the amphitheater is connected to its east rim by a trail that runs along the limestone formation. A ruined structure on the east rim, measuring eight meters by eight meters, also overlooks the amphitheater. On a more easterly point of the formation there are traces of another small structure, which measures 7.5 meters by 3.5 meters. The forward retaining wall of this structure is 1.7 meters high.

Name: Khog ra (Open Ground Ruins). Location: near mouth of the Chu lung valley, lCags sgang township, Ru thog county.

The location of this site on a shelf above the Chu lung watercourse (called rDo po Nag ril), and the existence of what appears to have been an aqueduct, suggest that Khog ra may have been an ancient habitation (elevation 4570 meters). This is precisely what some elders in the area believe the function of Khog ra was, calling it a bsKal Mon habitation. However, appraisal of the site is hampered by the lack of elevations and the highly obscured nature of the physical evidence. Southeast facing Khog ra is comprised of rocky pits and small foundation segments blanketing an approximately 5000 square meter area at the foot of Mount Khog ra. There are more manmade remains in the north half of the site than in the south, but it is not clear from a visual survey if this has to do with the spatial distribution of structures or geomorphologic changes. The south half of the site has been affected by the construction of a corral, and also probably by its location in the mouth of a ravine.

Around the edges of some of the depressions are faint traces of one or two meter long wall footings. Near the middle of the site are two relatively integral foundations that measure 4.5 meters by 7.5 meters, and six meters by 7.5 meters. An inspection of the number of pits at Khog ra suggests that the site may have once supported around 40 such foundations (when quadrangular building foundations dissolve and subside they can assume a round or oval shape). At the northeast corner of the site there is a trio of ruined Rigs gsum mgon po *mchod rten*. During my visit to Khrog ra, I encountered a construction crew poised to remove stones from the site to use at a nearby irrigation project. Upon reminding them of the potential importance of the site to Tibetan history, they cheerfully agreed to collect stones from another location.

Just upstream of Khrog ra, hugging a cliff that forms the right side of the Chu lung valley, there are the remains of a wall 60 meters in length and upwards of 2.5 meters in height. This wall with its uniform gradient and locational characteristics appears to be the remains of an aqueduct that watered Khrog ra. Further up the Chu lung valley from Khog ra, at a place called gSer phug, there are traces of what reportedly was an ancient gold mine. The site consists of around one dozen highly eroded shallow pits spread over a distance of approximately 30 meters.

(L-190; P-IVb; P-IVc) Name: Zhing ka gong (Upper Fields). Zhing ka gong, dGun sa township, sGar county.

The alternative name of this archaeological site is A rong Mon gyi Khang ro, named

after the A rong Chu from which irrigation water is collected. This site, attributed to the Mon, is located immediately above the contemporary agricultural village of Zhing ka gong, at the foot of the A yi la range. This supposed Mon habitation of no less than 100 large cells dwarfs the modern village of seven or eight houses. However, none of the upper walls or roofs have survived at the site, making it difficult to judge the original character of these edifices. Zhing ka gong is another of the key sites that comprised the ancient settlement of the sGar valley. It is clearly evident from the number of defunct fields in the vicinity attributed to the Mon that agriculture in the area was more extensive in the past than it is today.

The core of the Zhing ka gong ancient settlement covers an area measuring approximately 10,000 square meters, and consists of four main complexes with walls reaching 1.8 meters in height. The sheer size of the ruins located here demonstrates that it was a powerful center of sedentary culture in the distant past. Each of the four main complexes were heavily built multi-roomed affairs with walls up to one meter thick. The Northeast complex measures 25 meters by 25 meters, and seems to have contained about 18 sizable compartments or rooms. The Southeast complex measures 18 meters by 22 meters and supported about 16 large rooms. The Southwest complex, with approximately 19 rooms, measures 40 meters by 12 meters. Adjacent to the Southwest complex, extending in the direction of the Northeast complex, is an area of conterminous ruins I designate the Central complex. The Central complex contained no less than 30 large rooms or cells, and measures 25 meters by 60 meters. West of the four main complexes is a smaller example, measuring 16 meters by 16 meters. South of the four main complexes, situated on higher ground, are the ruins of the most lofty complex that measures 16 meters by six meters (elevation 4320 meters). Above this ruin is a boulder called Mon Lha rdo, residence of a *klu btsan* spirit who is said to have been worshipped at the ancient settlement. In the vicinity is a Mon *dur* type structure containing fragments of well built wall footings, which measures 12 meters across.

(L-191; P-IVd) Name: mChod rten Gong bzang (Salutary Superior Stupas) (etymology?). Location: above Dar chen, Bar kha township, sPu Hrang county.

This archaeological site consists of eight or nine heavily damaged foundations identified by residents of Gangs Ti se as those of an ancient Bon po habitation (elevation 4800 meters). The local attribution notwithstanding, mChod rten Gong bzang is likely to have been inhabited by religious practitioners attracted to holy Gangs Ti se. At least in part, the extensive *mani* walls found at the locale were constructed with stones taken from the ancient settlement. All but one of the ancient foundations form a compact unit on a shelf overlooking the Bar kha plain. They each measure around five meters by seven meters, with walls around 60 centimeters thick. In the specimen I designate Foundation III, small traces of the wall built into the rear slope are still integral. Likewise, Foundation IV has some of its rear slope or west wall intact, which is 80 centimeters in height. Foundation VII was partly obliterated by a *mani* wall that sits on top of it. Foundation VIII is located 200 meters to the north and consists of a single foundation that measures 4.5 meters by 4.5 meters.

Type-V: Graves with superficial superstructures of all types

In all of Upper Tibet west of eastern Nag tshang there are various types of superficial structures that did not support buildings but rather stood on their own. These are variously called Mon *khang* (houses), Mon *ro* (carcasses), Mon *rdo* (stones), Mon *ra* (enclosures) and Mon *dur* (graves) by the local inhabitants. These terms are uncritically and interchangeably used to describe a host of superficial structures of a number of major typologies. Most often these are believed to be grave sites of the ancient Mon, that elusive non-Bodic people thought to have inhabited huge swathes of Upper Tibet.[1] Interestingly, even in the Bon po enclave of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho, unlike the local castles and *gsas mkhar*, these types of sites are attributed to the Mon, not the people of Zhang zhung. This situation is probably indicative of a long process of social amnesia, with the effect of distancing the population from pre-Buddhist customs that cannot easily be reckoned with modern religious beliefs.

It is often observed by elderly residents of Upper Tibet that many of the structures described by the terminology given above are the superstructures of Mon graves. However, it is also said that a significant percentage of them do not have a funerary

1. In Tibetan literary tradition, burial and burial rites are commonly stated to have originated with the 8th King, Gri gum bTsan po, and three foreign Bon po of Bru sha, Kha che and Zhang zhung who conducted them. In particular the Bon po from Zhang zhung knew funerary rites (*bshid*) called 'subjugation of the sword' (*gri 'dul*), and what may have been evocations called *gshin po* and *'dur ba*. See Stein 1972, p 232. The *mDzod sgra 'grel* tells us (folios 27, 28): "The very powerful king of mighty speech, Dri (= Gri) rum (= gum) bTsan po became the sovereign who had dominion over all he ruled. His kingdom became a Bon kingdom. He acted as the divine leader of men. The Bon [po] were the keeper of his life and life-force. They protected the life of the King and nurtured his son, the minister. They led the dead to [good] places by the practice of funerals. They guided the views and activities of their devotees" (rgyal dri rum btsan po ni dbang che la 'bka btsan / mnga' ris rgyal po mnga' ris su gyur pa kun la mnga' mdzad / rgyal khams ni bon gyi rgyal khams su gyur te / mi rje lhas mdzad / tshe srog bon gyis 'dzin / rgyal gyi sku 'tsho / blon gyi bu gso / shi ba gnas su 'dur / dad pa can lta sprod kyis 'dren te /).

function. The funerary function of an undetermined percentage of the Mon structures is proven by the occurrence of human remains found in close association. In some places running water has cut through these graves, revealing human bones and artifacts. At other sites people have sometimes deliberately excavated the structures in search of valuables, namely *gzi* stones and metallic objects of the *thog lcags* class. However, it is much more usual for tombs to be unintentionally opened by local residents extracting stones for their building projects.

The superficial Mon structures, non-funerary structures notwithstanding, present us with a variety of typologies suggesting a long process of cultural evolution in the development of tombs. The differences in typologies may also be indicative of foreign cultural contacts, as well as socioeconomic distinctions within early societies. These kinds of crucial matters will not be satisfactorily addressed until a systematic archaeological investigation of these variable structures is conducted in Upper Tibet. Almost certainly the tombs of Upper Tibet hold the key to unlocking the early ethnohistory of the region. If and when significant assemblages of various types of artifacts, sub-surface grave architecture, and chronometric and anthropometric data are made available, we will finally come to acquire a better concept of where Upper Tibet fits in the puzzle of Eurasian ethnogenesis and cultural development.

Without the requisite archaeometric data, it is not yet feasible to make a binding chronological correlation between the grave monuments of Upper Tibet and their studied counterparts in southern Tibet. However, a review of archaeological data from southern Tibet serves as a benchmark aiding a preliminary analysis of the superficial structures attributed to the Mon. The study and excavation of tombs, particularly in southern and eastern Tibet, has been conducted by Chinese and Tibetan archaeologists over the last 25 years, yielding a large body of data on tomb architecture and funerary practices, as well as chronology. Funerary sites in southern Tibet have been grouped as follows:[2]

Prehistoric era (pre-2nd century BCE), underground graves of modest size marked on the surface by free-standing stones or stones arranged in a circle or square. These include stone burial chambers of the catacomb type, like those recently excavated in Gansu and Qinghai,[3] and by Aufschnaiter.[4]

Protohistorical period (2nd century BCE to 6th century CE), subdivided into three phases named after the areas in which they were found: Xiangpi, Dubu and Chogong. All three phases are represented by burial tumuli of various typologies.

2. This information comes from Mortari Vergara Caffarelli 1997, pp. 232-235, as derived from Chinese sources.
3. For a review of these graves and the cultures that created them see An Zhimin 1992b.
4. Five miles east of Lhasa in Shangdab village, at the lower end of a mountain ridge, Aufschnaiter (1956) excavated to a depth of two meters tombs occupying three horizons, including those consisting of chambers sealed by stone slabs and tumuli. In addition to human remains, painted pottery, beads and small iron artifacts, among other objects, were recovered. Anthropometric measurements carried out on skeletal samples determined that they possess the same craniological characteristics as the modern day population (Genna 1956).

Early Historical period (7th century to 9th century CE), characterized by the further development of burial mounds often made of rammed earth laid on stone foundations, which are sometimes reinforced with grass and wood separated by layers of stone slabs.

As the indigenous terminology does not discriminate between the various types of superficial structures attributed to the Mon in Upper Tibet, it is necessary that we adopt an archaeological terminology that reflects their morphological characteristics. From a visual survey of the diverse structural detritus I have established the following nomenclature: *(1)* Upper Tibet slab grave typology, *(2)* single-course quadrangular perimeter typology, *(3)* double-course quadrangular perimeter typology, *(4)* oval and round perimeter typology, *(5)* heaped-stone wall enclosure typology, *(6)* terraced burial typology, and *(7) bang so* typology.

The slab grave typology of Upper Tibet consists of thin undressed slabs of stone 30 centimeters to 1.2 meters in length, which are embedded into the ground edgewise. Individual stones of the slab graves project ten to 60 centimeters above the current surface of the ground. Slabs are either laid in the ground in single file or in two rows that run parallel to each other, at a distance of 15 to 70 centimeters apart. The perimeters formed by the courses of slabs range from two meters to more than 15 meters across and are rectangular, square or oval in shape, and it is not unusual to find these walls oriented in the cardinal directions. In some instances the slab walls do not form fully closed enclosures. A possibly related type of structure consists of boulders up to one meter in length that are embedded in the ground to form similar sized and shaped perimeters. There are, therefore, considerable variations in the Upper Tibet slab grave typology, and despite these kinds of structures sometimes being called Mon graves by local inhabitants, it is not yet clear if structures with an alternative function are found among them. Structures of the slab grave typology are invariably found in level or gently sloping, often sandy terrain. Their widespread distribution west of gNam ru (dPal mgon county) demonstrates that these regions were part of a culturally interrelated entity, and (in the political sphere) of the possible existence of a tribal confederation or state spread across Upper Tibet in the Zhang zhung-Mon period.

Graves with superstructures formed by slabs set edgewise into the ground are also associated with Scytho-Siberian cultures of the First Millennium BCE in South Siberia and Mongolia, as well as in Manchuria and eastern Tibet. Certain chronological and cultural links are indicated between the slab grave typologies of other parts of Inner Asia and those of Upper Tibet, but despite the existence of related grave typologies and an ancient way of life dominated by stock-keeping and hunting, the true extent of linkages between Upper Tibet and other Inner Asian cultures in antiquity remains to be determined. The exploration of slab graves is one of the linchpins in this process of ethnohistorical elucidation, which hopefully will gather pace in ensuing years.

The appearance of slab graves in Inner Asia is associated with large-scale economic and cultural changes that were taking place in the First Millennium BCE. In the 8th or 7th century BCE, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in various parts of Central Asia acquired many common cultural traits in the transformation to the Early Iron Age (Askarov *et al.* 1992: 459). In this period extensive use of the riding horse and saddle, and

economic mobility based on stock-rearing practiced in similar habitats, fostered contacts between various peoples over a vast area, leading to a degree of cultural integration of the pastoral tribes and the formation of the historico- cultural community called Scytho-Siberian (*ibid.* 463, 465). Archaeological evidence indicates that the nomadic societies had a patriarchal clan organization, with a powerful tribal elite and growing disparities in the social and economic arenas (Ishjmats 1994: 152, 153). With the onset of the Iron Age, quite large nomadic tribal unions appeared, such as the Hsiung-nu in Ordos and central Mongolia, the Tung Hu in east Mongolia and west Manchuria, and the Yueh-chih in Gansu (*ibid.* 152, 153).

In Early Iron Age Mongolia, circa 7th to 3rd centuries BCE (or perhaps even earlier), graves marked by small walls of slabs sunk edgewise into the ground oriented east to west and arranged in a square or rectangle are well represented.[5] Their distribution in central and eastern Mongolia, as well as Transbaikalia, suggests that these regions constituted a single ethno-cultural domain in the First Millennium BCE, and it has been noted that the slab graves of these regions resemble those of Upper Tibet.[6] In Transbaikalia, the slab grave culture had close connections with the earlier Tagar culture, and the use of this form of burial probably continued until the time of the northern migration of the Hsiung-nu, in the 2nd century BCE (Watson 1971: 128). Two distinct populations appeared to inhabit Mongolia of the Scytho-Siberian period: the slab grave culture was primarily Mongoloid, contrasting with the culture of the cist *kurgans* in northwestern Mongolia, which are primarily associated with a Europoid population (Volkov 1995: 325). The slab graves of Mongolia and Transbaikalia are also closely related to the slab grave culture of Manchuria (Watson 1971: 128-138). At one corner of a slab grave there is sometimes a stone column that is occasionally decorated with carved animals (Ishjmats 1994: 151). Skeletons lie on their backs usually with heads turned to the east, and are accompanied by the bones of domestic animals, clay vessels, Scythian type bronze pots, daggers, axes, arrowheads, bronze and iron horse bits, turquoise and carnelian beads, and other articles.[7] The discovery of cowries from the Indian ocean, three-legged Chinese vessels, beads of prophyllite, ornaments of nephrite and mother-of-pearl in slab graves, indicates that they reached Mongolia through far-reaching trade links that encompassed China, Central Asia and Afghanistan (Ishjmats 1994: 152). Like the slab grave culture, its predecessor the Late Karasuk culture, covered a vast steppe territory in Central Asia, and they both shared distinctive forms of bronze artifacts, ornamentation and bronze casting technology, as well as other cultural traits

5. See Volkov 1995: 321; Askarov *et al.* 1992, pp. 465, 466; Ishjamts 1994, p. 151; Okladnikov 1990, p. 87; Watson 1971, pp. 125, 126. For photographs of Mongolian slab graves see Novgorodova 1980, pp. 100-114.
6. See Volkov 1995, pp. 321, 324; Askarov *et al.* 1992, pp. 465, 466; Okladnikov 1990, pp. 87, 95; Novgorodova 1980, pp. 100.
7. See Volkov 1995, p. 321-323; Ishjamts 1994, pp. 151, 152; Okladnikov 1990, pp. 87, 88; Watson 1971, pp. 127, 128.

(Volkov 1995: 324; Askarov *et al.* 1992: 459, 465, 466).[8] In turn, the Andronovo culture may have been a medium for the rise of the Karasuk culture; there appear to be genetic links in the shapes and decorations of their pottery, as well as similarities in grave architecture and the designs of bronze objects (Askarov *et al.* 1992: 461, 462).[9]

There can be little doubt that Scytho-Siberian culture, as represented by the slab graves stretching over a 2000 kilometer arc to the north and east, parallels the development of similar grave architecture in Upper Tibet. Common grave architecture alone would suggest that migrations from the steppes played a rôle in the transmission of slab graves to Upper Tibet.[10] However, it remains to be ascertained if these cross-cultural slab grave typologies share a genetic relationship dating to the First Millennium BCE engendered by factors such as trade and invasion, or if it is the cause of antecedent cultural influences. The Iron Age steppe peoples were highly mobile and are known to have covered vast distances, and it is certainly possible that their trade networks, including items such as cowry shells, turquoise and carnelian beads, even extended into Tibet.

However, as none of the slab graves of Upper Tibet appear to have been properly excavated, the definitive sequencing and comparative study of grave goods is not yet possible. Far less satisfactory is the comparison of bronze artifacts unearthed from slab graves in Mongolia,[11] with Tibetan copper alloy objects of the *thog lcags* class,[12] which lack an archaeological provenance. Nonetheless, this type of comparison despite its inherent methodological drawbacks, does permit a preliminary assessment of the nature of the relationship that exists between copper alloy objects produced by the respective Iron Age civilizations. Similarities are closest between mirrors, trihedral

8. For information on the Karasuk (early second Millennium BCE) and related Tagar culture see, for example, Okladnikov 1990; Gryaznov 1969; Bokovenko 1995b; Volkov 1995.
9. For information on the Andronovo culture (second half of the Second Millennium BCE) see, for example, Masson 1992a; Okladnikov 1990; Gryaznov 1969.
10. There is indeed some historical and archaeological evidence to show that the Tibetan plateau was impinged upon by cultural influences coming from the eastern steppes. These cultural exchanges emerge in the Bronze Age in the various cultures of western China and the northeastern corner of the Tibet-Qinghai plateau (An Zhimin 1992b: 319). A comparative study of dolmen-like burials, consisting of a rectangular pit lined with stone slabs and rocks, and their contents of ceramics, stone artifacts and some bronze weapons ornamented with animal motifs, indicates that by the end of the Second Millennium BCE, Ch'iang tribes from the eastern steppes began to migrate into northwest Yunan, western Sichuan and probably eastern Tibet (Tzehuey Chiou-Peng 1998). The cist graves of these Chinese borderland regions represent a regional branch of a diverse group of stone funerary monuments found in the Eurasian steppes west to the Caucasus (*ibid.* 291, 292). Later, according to a Han history, in 221 BCE, the Yueh chih (who were probably of Scythian origin) were pushed to the edge of the Tibetan plateau by the Hsiung-nu general, Mao-tun (Enoki *et al.* 1994: 172-174).

arrowheads, buckles and buttons unearthed from Mongolian graves and their *thog lcags* counterparts. Some pre-Buddhist *thog lcags me long* (mirrors) have the same shapes and types of short perforated tangs as those found in Mongolia, which can only be indicative of intimate contacts between the cultures. Nevertheless, the more complex Scytho-Siberian animal style and anthropomorphic design metallic objects of Mongolia are distinct from their Tibetan counterparts. Firstly, the high level of bronze casting technology and fluidity of the cast designs exhibited by the steppe bronzes does not appear to have been often matched in Tibet. Major distinctions are also found in content: fantastic creatures, svelte felines, animal combat compositions and cervids with highly elaborate horns, among many other steppe designs are not represented in Tibetan *thog lcags*, which rather have their own characteristic motifs and style of execution. The earliest Tibetan figured artifacts depicting these fundamental differences serve as a good indication that they are not derived from Scytho-Siberian steppe culture, and we must therefore look elsewhere towards an earlier line of cultural and technological development for their origins. Genetic relationships in the production of copper alloy objects with the north and west, if they do exist, would have to be traced to antecedent cultures such as those existing in the Bronze Age proto-Iranian speaking world.[13] Similarly, Bronze Age cultural factors may be responsible for a divergent development of slab graves in the steppes and on the high plateau. Significant typological variations that exist in the Upper Tibet slab graves may also suggest that in their earliest form they were not adopted from Scytho-Siberian prototypes. Finally, an autochthonous or pre-early Iron Age origin for slab graves in Upper Tibet would correspond to the rock art traditions of the region, which developed indigenously over a very long period of time (see Type-XI).

The origins and chronology of graves represented by the single-course rectangular perimeter, double-course rectangular perimeter, oval and round perimeter, terrace, and heaped-stone wall enclosure typologies are unknown. Potentially, a very large cultural and chronological spectrum are represented by these types of monuments, but we will not know for certain until systematic excavation is conducted. Recent reports of human remains being found in these types of structures leaves no doubt that at least a certain proportion of them represent the superstructures of pre-Buddhist tombs.

The single-course perimeter typology consists of undressed or dressed stones set single file in the ground to form square or rectangular perimeters measuring three to ten meters across. In some examples stones in the perimeter protrude above the surface of the ground. Structural elements are usually not found inside the perimeters. The double-course perimeter typology consists of similarly shaped structures, which have perimeter walls comprised of two rows of stones laid parallel to one another. The walls thus formed are flush or almost flush with the surface of the ground. These types of structures measure between three meters and 15 meters in length. From a visual survey it is often not possible to differentiate between what may have been the wall footings of buildings and the large superstructures of graves. What may be a related type of tomb features courses of stones covering the ground to produce a kind of small platform. What is reported by local sources to be another type of cemetery consists of terraced walls built into a slope at a place called Khog ro (Bellezza 2000: 148, 149). Some single and double-coursed walls that form round and oval structures appear to represent another type of tomb. These types of structures have been documented at sites such as Lug Do, Mon khang and rTsid ra.[14]

11. Large assemblages of these grave artifacts are illustrated in Novgorodova *et al.* 1982.
12. See Tucci 1973, Bellezza 1998; 1999c.
13. Similarities in the designs of some *thog lcags* and bronzes of Luristan (primarily Second Millennium BCE) have been noted in Bellezza 2001, p. 46; Denwood 1977, pp. 222, 226; Tucci 1973, pp. 34-37.

A very common typology that is often called Mon *ra* by the local inhabitants, at least in certain instances, is another type of funerary monument. This typology is characterized by amorphous swathes of stones up to one meter in height and two meters in width that formed oblong, oval and irregular-shaped structures. Unmistakably, these structures have undergone much subsidence and dissolution and this would seem to indicate that they originally constituted stones piled in heaps to form enclosures. At a site known as Mon ra Yar skyed these types of structures are associated with burial cists (see pp. 87, 88)

At several locations in Upper Tibet rectangular platforms elevated prominently above the ground have come to light. They are similar in construction and design to the *bang so* or burial tumuli of southern Tibet, and it is very likely that these monuments from different areas of the plateau are chronologically related and were part of ritual and symbolic systems with much currency on the Tibetan plateau.[15] The widespread occurrence of burial mounds is recorded in the *mDzod sgra 'grel* (fol. 28), which states that in each of the 37 *'dus gnas* (assembly places for early Bon practitioners) there were *sa rtags* (border markers), *mchod rten* and cemeteries of the *bang so* type. However, mound burials do not appear to have been particularly common in Upper Tibet, and most of the existing structures are only a few meters across. The largest example identified by the author, found at the 'Or mo sGang site, is elevated 1.5 meters above the ground and covers an area of about 230 square meters (see p. 96).

In the Xiangpi and Dubu phases of the protohistorical period in southern Tibet stone cists underlie smaller rectangular or trapezoidal tumuli (Mortari Vergara Caffarelli 1997: 233, 234). In the final Chogong phase of the protohistorical period, and in the Punub historical phase, the tumuli tended to increase in size with the largest non-royal tombs attaining 15 meters in height and covering an area of 2700 square meters (*ibid*: 234, 235). The mound style of burial in Tibet is predated by the early and mid First Millennium BCE Uyuk and Pazyryk type *kurgans*,[16] and its transmission from the steppes and the

14. Bellezza 1996, pp. 65, 66; 1997a, pp. 261, 262; 2000a, pp. 39-41; 2001, pp. 149, 150, 153, 154.
15. *Bang so* as a form of burial are mentioned in circa 9th century Tibetan documents discovered in eastern Turkestan (Thomas 1951: 347).
16. These *kurgans* are associated with both Europoid and Mongoloid burials, but primarily the former group (Askarov *et al.* 1992: 466, 467; Volkov 1995: 325). In the Scytho-

Altai to Tibet may be indicated. At Lebri, in southern Tibet, Imperial period Tomb M121 with its random-texture masonry, stepped sides, rectangular stone cist and interior wooden structure held up by four columns, in shape and structure recalls certain tombs of the steppe nomads such as the Scythian *kurgan* at Kostromskaya, in southern Russia (*ibid*: 237).

(L-192; P-Va) Name: Lug rdo sPungs lhas Mon ra (Sheep Stone Heaped Corral Mon Enclosure) and 'Gug rmar nyer Mon ra. Location: North side of Bya rgod mTsho, Ma g.yo Township, Shen rtsa county.

No local information on the identity of the Mon *ra* of Lug rdo sPungs lhas and 'Gug rmar nyer was forthcoming, save that they were constructed by the ancient Mon pa. However, on the basis of the imputed identity of structures with similar morphological characteristics in other locations, I have categorized these variable structures as grave-like monuments. The identification of the structures at Lug rdo sPungs lhas and 'Gug rmar nyer with the Mon pa, in conjunction with their morphological characteristics, suggests that they date from the pre-Buddhist period.

In the lake-shore hamlet of Lug rdo sPungs lhas there is a Mon *ra*, an ancient stone foundation. West of the hamlet are two better preserved Mon *ra*, which are also located above the shoreline of Bya rgod mTsho (Vulture Lake) in close proximity to one another. The north specimen measures a maximum of 17 meters across and consists of a dense array of stones embedded in the ground. The south specimen, like its counterparts, was constructed of pink limestone. It is oval in shape, devoid of stones in the middle, and measures nine meters across and is raised 1.5 meters above the shoreline. Approximately two kilometers to the east, on the far side of the rugged 'Gug rmar nyer headland that divides Bya rgod mTsho into two halves, is an eponymous Mon *ra*. This oval structure, also located close to the water's edge, measures 13 meters across and one to 2.5 meters in height. The wall forming its perimeter is about two meters thick. There is a concavity in the center of the structure.

(L-193; P-Vb) Name: rNya la sNgo ril Mon dur. Location: west of the Tha gser valley, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county.

At this site five poorly preserved quadrangular superstructures of what are locally identified as graves belonging to the Mon are visible. There may be several others at the site, but not enough remains to make a positive determination. The superstructures of what are ostensibly tombs are situated on a shelf overlooking the north side of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. The square superstructures of two of the most intact specimens, set on

Siberian period Mongolia and the Altai appear to have been inhabited by two distinct populations: Europoid in the northwest and Mongoloid primarily in the east. The Eneolithic Europoid Afanasievo, in contrast with Palaeo-Asiatic groups, indicates that cultural and anthropological differences between the regions and anthropological groups developed at the onset of the Bronze Age. Despite the fundamental differences, these two ethnocultural groups had some traits and cultural elements in common, such as carved stelae (deer stones), trihedral arrowheads, psalia, horse bits and Scytho-Siberian animal style motifs. See Volkov 1995, p. 325.

the edge of the shelf, each measure 4.5 meters by 4.5 meters. The superstructures are of the quadrangular single stone perimeter typology. In 1999, in heavy summer rains, a ravine was formed cutting right through the middle of one of the other tombs. Reportedly, part of a human skull and other bones were washed out from the destroyed grave. The *'brog pa* usually avoid contact with ancient human remains, and during the present survey conducted one year after the destruction of the grave no osteological evidence was detected. In the ravine, on one of the red sandstone blocks that must have been an integral part of the tomb, a highly eroded inscription reading (effaced letter) A Hum was found. There is evidence of recent excavation and the extraction of stones at the rNya la sNgo ril Mon dur.

(L-194; P-Vc) Name: Chabs thog Mon dur khung and g.Yu shur Mon dur khung. Location: Chabs thog and g.Yu shur, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county.

These sites are situated due east of the glacial mountain sTag khra. On a plateau above the tiny Bon settlement of Chabs thog are the remnants of two rectangular structures locally identified as Mon graves. Approximately 150 meters west, at a locale called g.Yu shur, are two similar structures also believed to be tombs belonging to the ancient Mon pa. These structures belong to the quadrangular single stone perimeter typology. The best preserved specimen at g.Yu shur has small parts of all four walls intact, which were constructed from a single line of deeply set stones. There is no visible evidence of structural elements within the perimeter. The perimeter is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures 3.8 meters (east to west) by 4.4 meters (north to south). The walls of this ostensible tomb are flush with the ground and built of finely cut sandstone blocks with a maximum length of 45 centimeters. Unfortunately it is in eminent danger of destruction because its north wall is just 50 centimeters from the edge of the rapidly eroding earth slope of a chasm formed around the nearby watercourse. In close proximity are traces of a similarly constructed five meter long wall that is also believed to be part of a tomb.

(L-195; P-Vd) Name: Gram phyag Mon dur khung. Location: Gram phyag, 'Om bu township, Nyi ma county. This is another purported Mon cemetery located north of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. The most intact structure is found a little north of the Gram phyag encampment on a sandy flat. It is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures 4.5 meters by 4.5 meters. It consists of a perimeter wall formed by a single line of hewn igneous and sandstone blocks. Local residents are under the impression that there are other graves in the vicinity but that these have sunk below the sandy surface. Tiny traces of structures are indeed visible in the proximity. A few hundred meters south of Gram phyag a ravine has recently sliced through what is probably another grave. Traces of a masonry wall can still be seen in the eroded hillside. In 1999, bones washed out from the site, but the local *'brog pa* were averse to collecting them, and this evidence seems to have completely disappeared by the time the present survey was conducted. However, a shard of unglazed dull redware ceramic, nine centimeters in length, was found at the site.

(L-196; P-Ve) Name: Mon ra Yar skyed (Mon Enclosures in the Waist Above). Location: Mon ra Yar sKyed, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

The name of this extensive, ancient cemetery is derived from its placement above the Dung rtse valley floor at the base (waist) of the enclosing mountain range. Stretching for several kilometers, Mon ra Yar skyed, with its more than two dozen large superstructures, is a very important pre-Buddhist burial site connected in local legend to the Mon pa. The cemetery may have some functional correspondence with the extensive pre-Buddhist facilities found at nearby Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. Human elements and artifacts discovered at this site suggest that it is of very significant archaeological value.

Called Mon *ra* (Mon enclosures), the site is comprised of quadrangular and irregularly-shaped structures with walls made of heaped stones. Over the centuries these walls have subsided and are now typically 70 centimeters to 1.5 meters in thickness and 50 centimeters high. Originally they must have been significantly taller. The larger structures are often partitioned into smaller cells or units by walls made in the same fashion. One of the largest structures is found on the south end of Mon ra Yar skyed, at a place called Bar gling, and is named Mon ra rDzong chung after its supposed function as a fort (of the dead). It is irregularly-shaped, divided in two parts, and measures a maximum of 22 meters by 16 meters. On the south end of the structure there is a small rocky tumulus. Extending north and west from Mon ra rDzong chung there are at least eight more groups of Mon *ra*.

Mon *ra* II : located about 100 meters west of rDzong chung. Rectangular in shape and measuring 12 meters by 15 meters. On the south end of the structure there is a small rocky tumulus. In close proximity are more structural remains, including a Mon *ra* that measures 5.5 meters by seven meters.

Mon *ra* III : located approximately 22 meters north of Mon *ra* II. This structure measures 15 meters across.

Mon *ra* IV : located approximately 60 meters north of Mon *ra* III. Consists of seven irregularly-shaped structures that form a contiguous group. Traces of other Mon *ra* are found on the slopes above the valley floor.

Mon *ra* V : located about 110 meters north of Mon *ra* IV. The single structure measures 14 meters across.

Mon *ra* VI : located in Lu ma ring mo, named for a sacred spring. Single structure is about 17 meters in length. In the middle of it a small *mani* wall was constructed.

Mon *ra* VII : located about 220 meters northwest of Mon *ra* VI. Structure measuring 16 meters by 13 meters with walls up to 70 centimeters in height. In close proximity are smaller structures.

Mon *ra* VIII : located approximately 180 meters north of Mon *ra* VII. Consists of a group of five well delineated structures, the largest of which measures 15 meters by 11 meters.

Down slope of Mon *ra* VIII, approximately two kilometers to the north of Mon ra rDzong chung, near Lu ma Ring mo, is the largest structure at Mon ra Yar skyed called Mon ra rDzong chen, which measures 52 meters by 30 meters. Inside the irregularly-shaped perimeter there are stony mounds, a modern corral and a *lha gtsug* built by the Ze 'khor clan for their *pho lha*. On the east side of Mon ra rDzong chen recent excavations to a depth of one meter have taken place in order to supply building stones for the nearby settlement. These excavations reveal subterranean stone cists that appear to be divided into multiple chambers. Human and animal bones, and copper objects including a bulbous pot with a long spout, have been found during excavation. The style of this pot probably suggests an Iron Age date (500 BCE to 600 CE). North of Lu ma Ring mo, at Gyal rdo rTa ra, an extension of Mon ra Yar sked, there are reportedly more Mon *ra*.

(L-197; P-Vf) Name: rGod tshang (Vulture Nest). Location: overlooks the sKyung byung valley, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

This site was built on high ground in an exposed location as befits its name. According to a local source, the structures at rGod tshang are what is left of a Mon fortification. However, the lack of standing walls and the irregularity of the foundations is more reminiscent of Mon *ra* (graves) than a fort. Definitive identification of the ruins awaits further inquiry. The site contains Mon *ra* type structures distributed on two terraces that are separated from one another by a rock outcrop. The lower terrace supports four interconnected oval-shaped foundations that extend for 27 meters. On the upper terrace are foundations covering an area that measures 23 meters by 19 meters. These foundations are partitioned into east and west halves, the former having a more regular shape. It is doubtful that the walls at rGod tshang ever supported superstructures with prominent elevations.

(L-198; P-Vg) Name: Lu ma dKar mo Mon dur (Mon Graves of the White Female Spring). Location: Lu ma dKar mo, Khyung tshang township, Nyi ma county.

Located on sloping sandy ground, above the vast Khyung tshang basin, are eight foundations that resemble the superstructures of graves (quadrangular single stone perimeter typology). Local residents affirm that this is a Mon site, but they are unclear about the function of the structures. The term Mon *dur*, as in some other locations, is used here as a generic designation for pre-Buddhist monuments rather than specifically referring to tombs. Each of the structures is between three and five meters in length and all specimens, except for one, appear to be rectangular in shape. They have come down to us in varying states of preservation. The perimeters are composed of a single row of stones that protrude a maximum of 20 centimeters from the ground. Except for one specimen (and possibly a second) that has parallel courses of stones running crosswise across the enclosure, none of the rectangular specimens appear to have had structural features inside the superstructure. The eighth specimen has a semicircular perimeter composed of three parallel courses of stone of various sizes and types. The 4.5 meter long wall forming the base of the half circle is oriented in a north to south direction. However, most other structures at Lu ma dKar mo Mon dur are not oriented to the compass points.

(L-199;) Name: 'Khar skong Mon ra. Location: Khar kong Chu mgo valley, 'Brong tshang township, Nyi ma county.[17]

Near the settlement of 'Khar skong, located in a region traditionally known as Dang

17. No photographs of this site are available.

chung sTod ma, there are several Mon 'enclosures' (*ra*) (elevation 4800 meters). Their function escapes local attention, but based on morphology, these may represent the superstructures of graves (quadrangular double-coursed stone perimeter typology). On the left side of the 'Khar skong chu mgo valley is a foundation built primarily of milky quartz that measures 8.8 meters (east to west) by 7.8 meters (north to south). The double-coursed, 60 centimeter thick walls of this structure are well aligned in the cardinal directions and are flush with the ground. To the west, near a gully, are two much smaller structures. These highly disintegrated and seemingly inconsequential remains are also called Mon *ra*. Unlike the open middle of the larger specimen, the ground within the perimeters of the smaller structures is capped with a layer of stones. On the opposite side of the 'Khar skong Chu mgo valley there is another quadrangular Mon *ra*. It has been heavily damaged by the removal of stones to build corrals. Aligned in the compass points, it measures nine meters by nine meters, and is of similar construction to its counterparts.

(L-200; P-Vh) Name: Khrog lam Mon ra. Location: Khrog lam valley, sTong mTsho township, sGer rtse county.

This site, also called Khrog lam Mon ro, is situated in the broad mouth of the valley formed by the reddish ridges known as Khrog lam Mar skyed and Khrog lam Yar skyed. It contains at least one dozen oval and quadrilateral-shaped enclosures spread out over a more than 200 meter length of the gently sloping sandy terrain. These remains are supposed to have been left by the Mon pa, the legendary inhabitants of sGer rtse (also spelled dGe brtse), who are thought to have lived long before the sGer rtse clan led by rGe'u Chung migrated to the region from rDza chu ka, approximately 250 years ago. It is commonly believed in sGer rtse that from the time the Mon pa mysteriously disappeared until the time when seven households under the sGer rtse clan arrived, the region was bereft of people (the difficulty with this stereotypical view of history is that it negates the presence of older Tibetan clans in the region). Senior members of the sGer rtse community believe that not all the Mon *ra* or Mon *ro* contain human remains but that an unknown portion certainly do. It is with this proviso that I include the Khrog lam Mon ra site under the heading of graves (quadrangular double-coursed stone perimeter typology). The Mon *ra* and Mon *ro* are locally often cited as evidence of the early inhabitation of sGer rtse by the Mon pa.

The Mon *ra* of Khrog lam are all built of varying-sized pieces of limestone and quadrangular specimens range in size from 2.5 meters by 2.5 meters to 7.5 meters by six meters. The largest oval shaped specimen is 12 meters across. The Mon ra were constructed with neat double-course stone walls 50 centimeters to 75 centimeters in thickness and, in general, are slightly elevated above the ground level. The smaller specimens may have had a masonry cap, while the larger specimens all have open centers.

A couple of kilometers southwest of Khrog lam is a low-lying red ridge called Dil ske sNgon dmar (Blue And Red Knoll). Reportedly, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, while quarrying stones near the top of this ridge, human bones were found. At the south foot of Dil ske sNgon dmar is a square-shaped Mon *ra* aligned in the

cardinal directions that measures 2.5 meters across. The walls of this structure are constructed of stones up to 70 centimeters in length that stick upwards of 40 centimeters out of the surface, and the entire structure is conspicuously raised above ground level. This structure seems to belong to the Tibetan slab grave typology. In the vicinity there are possibly other specimens but these are too damaged to positively identify. At a slightly lower elevation, just above a flood plain, there is a structure with a curved perimeter wall composed of large stones, which appears to be the superstructure of another tomb.

(L-201; P-Vi) Name: Gu ru Rin po che sGrub phug Mon ro. Location: cave located in sTong mTsho township, sGer rtse county.

The identification of the cave located here with the Vajrayana champion Gu ru Rin po che is certainly apocryphal. Prayer flags and red ochre *g.yung drung*, probably of recent execution, mark the cave. The Gu ru Rin po che sGrub phug and archaeological site are nestled in the range of mountains situated north of the sTong mTsho basin. Near the mouth of the cave are faint traces of foundations, suggesting that it may have once been enclosed by a wall.

About 200 meters southwest of the Gu ru Rin po che sGrub phug there are two Mon *ro* (also known as Mon *ra*) aligned with the cardinal directions, which measure 2.5 meters by 4.5 meters and four meters by three meters. Twenty-three meters north of these structures is another specimen that measures five meters by 5.7 meters. These structures have clearly delineated double-coursed limestone walls a maximum of 80 centimeters thick. The two smaller specimens are prominently raised above the level of the plain in which they sit, while the larger specimen is flush with the surface. Further west are five more quadrangular structures also aligned in the compass points and of similar construction (elevation 4860 meters). The largest of these five Mon ro measures 7.5 meters by 7.5 meters and is elevated 1.5 meters above ground level.

Continuing west there is another limestone formation that hosts a number of small walls facing in a northerly direction that are attributed to the Mon. The unusual aspect of the walls, their small size and their isolation from other structures precludes an identification of these enigmatic monuments. Near the summit of the formation there is a retaining wall, 1.5 meters in height, that flanks a level area measuring seven meters by five meters.

(L-202; P-Vj) Name: Sag the Mon ro. Location: situated south of the Karma bka' brgyud monastery of Sag the, g.Yu gtog township, sGer rtse county.

At this site there are six Mon *ro* spread over a distance of 250 meters in the midst of the Sag the plain. Its Mon and epic connotations aside, according to local informants, it is not clear what the function of the Mon *ro* is, although it is understood that such structures in the region are often tombs. On the basis of their morphological traits the Mon *ro* of Sag the can be provisionally identified as pre-Buddhist tombs.

The southerly most example is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures five meters (east to west) by 2.75 meters (north to south) (it seems to belong to the Tibetan slab grave typology). It consists of a well built perimeter wall 60 centimeters to 70 centimeters in thickness with individual stones up to 80 centimeters in length, some of

which protrude prominently from the ground (elevation 4580 meters). In the central sector of the site there are four more Mon *ro*. The two better preserved examples consist of square perimeters, aligned with the cardinal directions, measuring four meters by four meters and five meters by 5.6 meters. The north side of the larger specimen is conspicuously elevated above the plain. In the north sector of the Sag the site there is a single Mon *ro* that measures 11 meters by 5.5 meters. Segments of prominent walls remain, including one that bisects the structure into two roughly equal-sized parts. On the south end of the structure two large stones in the wall stick 30 centimeters out of the ground.

(L-203; P-Vk) Name: rDo ra sKya kyog. Location: between the Ma mig basin and the Ser kyog pass.

The site consists of at least four fragmentary stone perimeters of the Mon *ra* typology (elevation 4660 meters) located in a tributary valley of the Ma mig basin. The quadrangular single stone perimeters of the structures each measure around five meters by five meters. Individual stones in the perimeter walls are up to 70 centimeters in length. One of the structures is elevated 50 centimeters above the plain. In close proximity to the Mon *ra* are segments of walls made up of parallel courses of small pieces of limestone. No local information on rDo ra sKya kyog was forthcoming and its identification as a grave site is provisional.

(L-204; P-Vl; P-Vm) Name: 'Dzog gdong Mon dur. Location: the old township headquarters of Lho ma, sGer rtse county.

Near the crumbling mud brick buildings of the old administrative center of southern Seng 'khor are several Mon *dur* (elevation 4430 meters). Three irregularly-shaped structures measuring ten, nine and four meters across are found here. The non-uniform perimeter walls of these ovoid structures appear to have been constructed of heaps of stones that have long since subsided into their present configuration (Mon *ra* grave typology). Reportedly, there are two similar specimens found a little further to the east. No local information was forthcoming on these structures, save that they were supposedly constructed by the Mon. An inspection of their morphological characteristics suggests that they may be the superstructures of graves.

At some distance to the west, at a location called Dzab sa, is what appears to be another Mon *dur*, rectangular in shape, which measures 1.35 meters by 3.3 meters (Tibetan slab grave typology) (elevation 4810 meters). The single line of stones forming the two sets of perimeter walls regularly protrude ten to 15 centimeters from the surface of the ground.

Several kilometers away from 'Dzog gdong Mon dur is a site called rTsog ra'i mTshams khang, consisting of an old stone shelter built into a granite cliff. No information on the history or identity (save that it was used by meditators of yore) of rTog ra'i mTshams khang could be obtained. The construction of the walls and the presence of long granite slabs on the site seem to indicate that it was an all-stone structure. The foundations and part of the walls of two rooms measuring about three meters by four meters form the bulk of rTsog ra'i mTshams khang.

(L-205; P-Vn) Name: Ri rgyal Mon dur (Mon Graves of Monarch Mountain). Location: Ri rgyal, Shen chen township, sGer rtse county.

At the southeast foot of the long red flat-topped mountain Ri rgyal, that serves as the *yul lha* of the locale, there are at least eight Mon *dur* (elevation 4700 meters). Reportedly, at least a portion of the structures found at Ri gyal Mon dur are tombs. These rectangular-shaped structures tend to be aligned in the cardinal directions and are composed of a single course of red sandstone blocks set into the ground edgewise (Tibetan slab grave typology). Stones in the walls protrude as much as 40 centimeters from the surface. Measuring between 1.2 meters by 2.5 meters and six meters by nine meters, these Mon *dur* are spread over a distance of several hundred meters.

Mon *dur* I : 2.5 meters (north to south) by 1.2 meters (east to west). Located on the east end of the site. Outside this structure there are parallel rows of stones set into the ground. The stones used to construct the structure are raised a maximum of 20 centimeters from the ground.

Mon *dur* II : consists of a group of three large specimens situated a few meters south of Mon *dur* I. The largest and best preserved specimen measures 5.5 meters (north to south) by 6.2 meters (east to west) and is elevated slightly above ground level. Although parts of all four walls are *in situ* nearly all of the slabs are collapsed on the ground.

Mon *dur* III : located approximately 70 meters northwest of Mon *dur* II. Stones of the highly degraded superstructure protrude a maximum of 40 centimeters from the ground. It appears to have been composed of both inner and outer slab walls.

Mon *dur* IV : 4.5 meters by 3.5 meters. Located approximately 125 meters west of Mon *dur* III. Stones in the poorly preserved superstructure are up to 75 centimeters in length.

Mon *dur* V : nine meters (north to south) by six meters (east to west). Located about 130 meters to the west of Mon *dur* IV. There are few *in situ* stones left in this highly disintegrated specimen. In close proximity is another highly dissolute example.

Mon *dur* VI : located 200 meters west of Mon *dur* V. Although most stones in the perimeter of the superstructure are lying prostrate, a few are still *in situ* set in the ground on their edges.

Nestled on the south side of Ri rgyal and spread over a distance of 60 meters is a more or less contiguous band of sandstone footings and wall fragments up to 70 centimeters in height (elevation 4700 meters). The highly degraded double-coursed walls at this site are a maximum of 1.1 meters in thickness. The largest single structure has an irregular shape and is 13 meters across. The advanced degradation of this terraced site does not permit a typological assessment, but it most resembles a necropolis or habitation.

(L-206; P-Vo) Name: Shen chen Mon dur. Location: the new Shen chen township headquarters, sGer rtse county.

Five Mon *dur* are found at the edge of a new township facility.[18] Local sources do

18. About one kilometer from new Shen chen there is a dark craggy limestone formation called Brag phug, which is commonly identified as the winter abode of the epic heroine

not appear to know the precise function of these structures but based on appearance, they seem to be the superstructures of tombs. These consist of the quadrangular single-course perimeter typology. Aligned in the cardinal directions the limestone constructions range in size from 4.5 meters by 4.5 meters to 11.8 meters (north to south) by 6.4 meters (east to west). The largest specimen is composed of blocks up to 90 centimeters in length and appears to be segmented east to west by two or three walls. One specimen, measuring six meters (east to west) by eight meters (north to south), might have structural elements within the perimeter.

(L-207; P-Vp) Name: sMan gyam dKar mo Mon dur (Mon Graves of the White Medicine Rock Shelter). Location: sMan gyam dKar mo, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

At the base of a holy mountain of the same name, in a field of large granite boulders, there are at least five Mon *dur* groups (elevation 4550 meters). This large site is primarily comprised of different shaped structures constructed with parallel courses of variable-sized granite stones up to 1.1 meters in length, set 60 centimeters to one meter apart, which protrude upwards of 60 centimeters from the ground. These types of monuments did not support buildings, but rather appear to be the superstructures of graves, as the name of the site implies.

The central focus of sMan gyam dKar mo, which I call Mon *dur* IV, consists of an area of contiguous foundations measuring 60 meters by 20 meters. Most of the structures are of the Tibetan slab grave typology; however, the single largest edifice of the site has the distinctive morphological characteristics of the *bang so* typology. This structure, aligned in the cardinal directions, measures 12 meters by 15 meters and its crumbling walls on the west and east sides reach 1.5 meters in height. Where measurable certain coherent wall segments are around 65 centimeters in thickness. As the site in general is felt by local residents to be that of a Mon cemetery, this large well built structure is probably a burial mound. On the east side of the tumulus are significant structural extensions nearly flush with the ground. There are also extensive walls south of the mound. These walls seem to form another type of architectural monument apart from the mound and slab structures. Approximately 25 meters southeast of the tumulus there is a radically inclined one meter tall dark gray pillar with tiny traces of masonry embedded in the ground in close proximity. It would seem that this standing stone was an integral part of the Mon *dur* site.

Mon *dur* I, located approximately 50 meters west of Mon *dur* IV, is an oval shaped structure 2.6 meters across that is elevated 50 centimeters above ground level.

Mon *dur* II is situated approximately 115 meters north of Mon *dur* I. It consists of a simple perimeter that measures 12 meters by 14 meters. In order to be level the structure on its down hill side is elevated about 50 centimeters above the slope.

Mon *dur* III is situated approximately 50 meters southeast of Mon *dur* II. Its parallel walls form an enclosure that measures 12 meters by ten meters. Individual stones in

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A thag Klu mo. There do not appear to be ancient remains in the large cavern located at Brag phug. For more information see Bellezza 2001, p. 128.

this structure stick upwards of 60 centimeters out of the ground.

Mon *dur* V is roughly 80 meters south of Mon *dur* IV. It is an oval structure level with the ground measuring nine meters across. It appears to be of the heaped stone Mon *ra* typology. In addition to the five groups I have enumerated there are other minor structures at sMan gyam dKar mo.

(L-208; P-Vq) Name: sGog ra Mon ra. (Mon Enclosures of Garlic Open Ground). Location: Gog ra valley, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

In the vicinity of the petroglyphs found in the sGog ra valley (see pp. 140-142) there are a number of unidentified ruins. These could be either the remains of graves or buildings. The largest specimen measures five meters by nine meters and has wall fragments up to one meter in height (elevation 4600 meters). Stones upwards of 1.2 meters in length went into its robust construction. On the same steep hillside, in close proximity, are the vestiges of two smaller probably related structures. A little further up valley there are the remnants of another structure measuring four meters by four meters. Nearer the Gog ra valley stream course are possibly two or three other Mon *ra*, but these are too disintegrated for positive confirmation.

(L-209; P-Vr) Name: Brag lung Nub ma Mon dur (Mon Graves of Escarpment Valley West). Location: mouth of the Brag lung Nub ma valley, rTsa phug township, Ru thog county.

On a shelf located above the left side of the Brag lung Nub ma watercourse are several fragmentary structures identified locally as superstructures of Mon graves. These are constructed in a fashion typical of the Tibetan slab grave typology with stones in the walls sticking conspicuously from the ground. At one place there are three wall segments between 1.7 meters and 4.6 meters in length. Further down the valley there is evidence of around six similar superstructures (elevation 4630 meters).

(L-210; P-Vs) Name: Chu mKhar gyam Mon dur. Location: upper rDo dmar Chu, rDo dmar township, Ru thog county.

Located west of the Chu mKhar gyam castle (see p. 34), there is an area of poorly preserved wall segments and small tumuli encompassing an area measuring 25 meters by 30 meters (elevation 4480 meters). The entire area is slightly elevated above the plain in which it sits. Although it is called a Mon *dur* (cemetery) by some local sources, it is not at all clear from the visual evidence whether this was a burial ground.

(L-211; P-Vt) Name: Thar lcang Mon dur. Location: Thar lcang township, sGar county.

Located between the ruins of Ma lung and mKhar mChong gog Mon mKhar (see pp. 36, 37) are a number of structures of the Mon *ra* / *dur* typology. No local information on these structures was forthcoming. South of mChong gog Mon mKhar, on the edge of the bluff overlooking the Thar lcang gTsang po, there are three Mon *ra* measuring between four meters and six meters across. These appear to have been rectangular structures but they have disintegrated to assume an oval shape. On higher ground, tucked away in a hollow, there are five or six interconnected, irregularly-shaped structures. The largest of these is 13 meters across and heaped stones to a height of one meter form its perimeter.

(L-212; P-Vu) Name 'Or mo sgang (spelling?) Mon dur. Location: on the 'Bri dkar la pass, east of the dGe rgyas county seat.

This important example of the Mon *dur* typology straddles the 4900 meter high 'Or mo sgang saddle, above and just out of view of the road that connects gZhung pa township with the dGe rgyas county seat. Wide vistas open up west of the saddle in the direction of sNa phug. There are two sites of Mon *dur*; one on each side of the broad pass. The aeolian aspect of the site atop a high, open saddle suggests that pre-Buddhist beliefs concerning the sky and afterlife were at play in the construction of 'Or mo sgang. However, confirmation that the monuments at 'Or mo sgang are indeed the superstructures of tombs will not come until at minimum preliminary trench excavations are conducted at the site.

'Or mo sgang North consists of 12 heavily built quadrangular structures spread over 120 meters of sandy terrain. The smallest specimen, located near the north end of the site, is an exception in that it may have been oval-shaped. The north end of the site is on the crest of the pass, while the remainder of it is situated east of the crest. Each of the heavily constructed perimeters composing the structures is made from large blocks of igneous gabbro and to a lesser extent limestone. Individual stones average 40 centimeters to 60 centimeters in length with a maximum size of one meter. The actual construction of the walls is difficult to discern due to their disintegration. The Mon *dur* tend to be raised above the slope, and there is no evidence that they contained any structural features inside the enclosures. The highly deteriorated smallest structure at 'Or mo sgang, located near the northern extremity of the site, appears to measure three meters across. Near the south end of 'Or mo sgang North there is a particularly large specimen measuring nine meters by nine meters. Its south wall is elevated more than one meter above the surrounding ground level. Within the walls of another large specimen (ten meters by 7.5 meters), located in the middle of the site, a concavity has formed.

'Or mo sgang South contains three Mon *dur* built primarily of white granite that straddle the top of the pass. The smallest of the three (5.7 meters by seven meters) is also the most northerly and is built like its counterparts at 'Or mo sgang North. The very large central specimen measures 18 meters by 13 meters and is elevated 1.5 meters above the level of the pass (*bang so* typology). While its walls are not aligned in the compass points, it does sit squarely astride the saddle. The walls appear to have been well built but they have undergone much disintegration. There are no visible features on top of the structure and a slight concavity has formed in the middle of the mound. The southerly most specimen at 'Or mo sgang measures 12 meters by seven meters and is slightly elevated above the pass on its west side.

Type-VI: Cubic-shaped graves built on summits

One of the most distinctive type of archaeological monument in Upper Tibet is the cubic-shaped-grave with a small central depository. These types of tombs are invariably found on or near talus-strewn summits (*rdza ri*) that enjoy panoramic views. Most of the graves measure between 1.6 meters and 2.5 meters on each of their four sides, and were under two meters in height. The exterior walls of these structures are built of slabs of stones, 30 centimeters to 1.2 meters in length, laid in random courses, while the walls of the central chambers were more finely crafted. From the little *in situ* evidence surviving, the chambers in the middle of the structure were covered with stone slabs and sealed with clay and gravel. The entire structure may have been plastered and painted but signs of this are not apparent. According to local sources, these structures are called Mon *dur* (graves) and are burial monuments in which the ancient Mon were interred. A small chamber set in the middle of the structure above ground level appears to have been a depository, which presumably functioned as reliquary or ossuary chamber in which the remains of high status individuals were placed. Their exclusive location on top of mountains and the relatively small numbers in which they are found indicate that they constituted a special type of tomb probably used by a priestly and / or ruling class. As the central chambers are no more than one meter in length, only adult corpses that were dismembered, or in the form of a secondary or fractional burial, could have been deposited inside. The actual nature of burial is speculative because the tombs no longer contain human remains.[1]

The pilfering and destruction of these exposed tombs would have been relatively easy and this probably accounts for their current condition, natural phenomena (such as subsidence and earthquakes) notwithstanding. The cubic-shaped graves are distributed from sGer rtse west to Ru thog.[2] Thus far none are reported to the east in Nag tshang ('Om bu and Shen rtsa counties), nor south of the Transhimalaya range.

1. At Mon pa Nag po, in gZhung pa Ma tshan, there is one exception containing skeletal remains (Bellezza 2000a: 41; 2001: 155).
2. On the UTCE, at a site previously surveyed called Rwa 'brog 'Phrang sgo, in Ru thog county (Bellezza 2000: 41; 2001: 154, 155), I found two relatively well preserved tombs of the cubic-shaped summit typology (elevation 4440 meters). These are situated

Cultural factors explaining their restricted distribution have yet to be formulated. Burial structures perched on high mountain-tops (to 5500 meters) clearly point to a pre-Buddhist cultural phase, the origins of which are not yet clear. As a cultural anachronism this form of burial may have persisted through the Imperial period and perhaps as late as the *bstan pa phyi dar*. The instructions for the funeral of ancient Bon priests closely correspond with the placement and design of the cubic-shaped tombs (Hoffman 1961: 23):

> When a casket of stone slabs has been prepared in a spirit shrine on an appropriate rocky mountain for the corpse of a shaman Bon po, the dead man should be clothed in blue silk and placed on a seat in the form of a swastika. Two drums should be put into his hands, and before him should be placed the white feathered divine arrow with silk strings of five different kinds; and also excellent wine.[3] Amidst the smell of scents and the smoke of various kinds of wood, bind the forehead of the dead man with adornments of white wool and then place his body between grains of corn and wood.

The *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* records that one of the tombs of kings Gri gum bTsan po and sPu lde Gung rgyal was situated in a meadow and the other on a rocky mountain (Sakyapa Sonam Gyaltsen: 86). The same text refers to a high mountain burial for the three bTsan kings, Khri btsan nam, Khri sgra dpung btsan and Thog rje Thog btsan by locating their tombs on Gangs dkar rtse (Snow Mountain Peak) (*ibid.* 87). Ancient Tibetan beliefs associated with the *lha yul* (celestial realm) and *bla khyim* (abode of the soul) must have some connection with the Upper Tibet practice of burial in lofty locations. Ethnographic data relating to archaic funerary rites in the Himalaya may be valid to our understanding of this ancient custom. For example, Gurung *gyabre* (sacerdotal class legitimizing the rule of the Ghale nobles of the Mu clan) conduct the souls of the deceased to Oble, the land of the dead, located on a summit, via the white trail of the *lha* (Mumford 1990: 182-191). In a Tamang origination account it is said that the *btsan*[4] and humans married in the ancient past (Holmberg 1996: 152), and such genealogical interconnections may also have played a role in montane funerary rites. High mountain burials are also known from Mongolia and may reflect common cultural linkages buried deep in antiquity. The 13th century *Secret History of the Mongols* records the ancient custom of burying ancestors and important personages up mountains in visible places (Heissig 1980: 103). Similarly, Siberian shamans were buried on mountains in a manner not unlike that described in the Bon funeral above (Hoffman 1961: 23, 24).

above the lower cemetery in crags poised above Ra 'brog mTsho. In both examples some parts of the central chamber have survived.

3. An Imperial period document found in eastern Turkestan written on wood in cursive *dbu can* script may refer to the burial of those killed in battle, which included seven Bon po and two Bon po rje (noble Bon po) and was accompanied by ceremonial drinking and a *glud* (ransom) ritual (Thomas 1951: 389-395).
4. The *btsan* are an ancient class of martial and genealogical spirits that customarily live on rocky mountains.

(L-205; P-VIa) Name: Ri rgyal Mon dur (Mon Graves of Monarch Mountain). Location: Ri gyal, Shen chen township, sGer rtse county.

Another group of structures locally referred to as Mon *dur is* found on or near the long mesa-like summit of Ri rgyal. On a talus-strewn shelf below the southwest summit of Ri rgyal, three red sandstone cubic-shaped tombs form a row (elevation 4830 meters). The middle specimen, while being the most intact, has suffered from centuries of subsidence and consequent deformation of the structure. It measures 2.2 meters by 2.5 meters and has a maximum height of one meter. What presumably was the central reliquary chamber is partly intact. The south specimen in the row of three Mon *dur* has been reduced to a pile of rubble, but vestiges of its central reliquary are still visible. Slabs of red sandstone up to 1.2 meters in length went into its construction. The north specimen has been nearly leveled.

On a ledge below the southeast summit of Ri rgyal there is a Mon *dur* aligned in the cardinal directions that measures 2.7 meters by 2.7 meters with a maximum height of 95 centimeters. The largely intact central chamber is filled with dislodged stones from the outer walls. Another highly degraded specimen is found below the south summit. On the summit of Ri rgyal, towards its east flank, are the obscured remains of what appear to be two more graves. On one of these structures a cairn 1.5 meters in height was constructed that is called Srid pa'i mtho po (Prominence of Existence), or possibly Srid pa'i tho po (Marker of Existence). It is said to mark the territory of some past headman.

(L-213; P-VIb) Name: dGe lhas mGo dkar Mon dur (Virtuous Fold White Head Mon Graves). Location: on the summit of the two peaks of dGe lhas mGo dkar, Ri dmar township, sGer rtse county.

At this site, which overlooks the sTong mTsho lake basin, seven crumbling cubic tombs built from the local brown sandstone were documented. All of the tombs sit on highly exposed talus-blanketed locations on or near the summits of two mountains called dGe lhas mGo dkar. The discovery of this site pushes the distribution of this type of monument east to 84 degrees, 34 minutes east longitude.

On the narrow east summit of dGe lhas mGo dkar South there is a single tomb built in the characteristic fashion with courses of thin slabs of stone carefully laid on top of one another. The width of the summit is just sufficient to accommodate this structure. It is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures 1.7 meters (north to south) by 2.3 meters (east to west), and has a maximum height of 80 centimeters (elevation 4700 meters). None of the central reliquary in this specimen has survived. On the nearby west summit there is probably another specimen but it is nearly totally obliterated. Below the west summit, on a shelf, on the west side of the mountain, there is another highly degraded specimen. Directly below the grave on the east summit, on the west face of the mountain, are two more specimens. The more intact one measures 2.3 meters (east to west) by 1.7 meters (north to south), and is aligned with the compass points. A portion of its central reliquary is still intact.

On the south summit of dGe lhas Go dkar North there is a tomb that measures 2.5 meters (east to west) by 1.75 meters (north to south) with a maximum height of 1.1 meters. Part of its central chamber is visible. On the nearby north summit of the same mountain there is another specimen that was built against a crag. It measures 1.5 meters by two meters and has a maximum height of 80 centimeters. The partly integral central reliquary of this structure is full of debris.

(L-214; P-VIc) Name: rTa nu Mon dur (Horse Teat Mon Graves). Location: rTa nu, 'O ma township, sGer rtse county.

Just below the rocky summit of rTa nu mountain (named for its resemblance to a horse's teat), which overlooks rTa rabs mTsho, 14 specimens of the cubic-shaped grave typology are found. This compact group of more or less aligned Mon *dur* are found at an elevation of over 4600 meters. The structures are all in an advanced state of degradation, and although they do not appear to be at variance with the basic characteristics of the typology, few original architectural features are discernible. The tombs were oriented so that they all face the rTa rabs lake basin. The lowest and most northerly specimen (Mon *dur* I) is also one of the best preserved, but what is left of its central reliquary chamber is completely filled with rubble. It measures 1.5 meters (north to south) by 2.5 meters (east to west) and now has a maximum height of 80 centimeters.

Northwest Mon *dur:*

Mon *dur* II : 2.2 meters by 2.4 meters and 30 centimeters in height. Located directly above Mon *dur* I. Heavily degraded specimen.

Mon *dur* III : located above Mon *dur* II; of similar size and state of preservation.

Mon *dur* IV : located slightly above Mon *dur* III. This specimen has been mostly obliterated and could be easily overlooked if one was not familiar with the typology.

Mon *dur* V : 1.9 meters by 1.9 meters; reduced to a maximum height of 60 centimeters. What has survived of the central depository in this poorly preserved specimen has been in-filled with rubble.

Mon *dur* VI : appears to measure 1.25 meters by 1.25 meters; 70 centimeters in height. This is the smallest cubic-shaped grave surveyed by the author to date.

Mon *dur* VII : 1.7 meters by 1.9 meters. Although this specimen is nearly leveled, a little of the stonework in the central chamber is *in situ*.

Mon *dur* located in view of rTa rabs mTsho:

Mon *dur* VIII : reduced to a pile of rubble.

Mon *dur* IX : remains are hardly recognizable.

Mon *dur* X : 1.8 meters by 2.2 meters; maximum height 80 centimeters.

Mon *dur* XI : most southerly specimen at the rTa nu site.

Mon *dur* XII : very poorly preserved, almost reintegrated into the rocky slope.

Mon *dur* XIII : the highest specimen at rTa nu. Part of its central chamber is still intact.

Mon *dur* XIV : heavily disintegrated specimen below summit.

(L-215; P-VId) Name: Na ma lung Mon khang. Location: Na ma lung, Tshwa kha township, dGe rgyas county.

On the summit of a 5300 meter tall mountain of the same name is a single specimen of the cubic-shaped summit grave typology. It was constructed from the light-colored stones found on the summit. Towering 750 meters above the valley floor, Mon khang is the tallest peak in the area, thus the monument enjoys excellent views in all directions. Not only is the site unusual for only having one grave but this single specimen is the largest surveyed by the author to date. Its geographic exclusivity almost certainly means that it interred the remains of a high status individual or group of individuals.

Aligned in the cardinal directions, and measuring 2.5 meters (north to south) by 3.5 meters (east to west) with a maximum height of 1.4 meters, its size has misled local residents to believe that it was an abode of the Mon rather than one of their burial sites. The relatively well preserved central chamber measures two meters (east to west) by 1.1 meters (north to south), and now has a maximum depth of one meter, but originally it was somewhat deeper. Several of the capstones that formed the roof of the reliquary are *in situ*, while others lie at the bottom of the receptacle. These roof stones are 60 centimeters to 80 centimeters in length, while the stones used to construct the walls tend to be smaller. It seems likely that the structure was once mortared and well sealed; evidence for this is found in the way of very fine grained earth residue between the courses of masonry and a layer of small stones covering the top of the better preserved south and west walls. Unlike other peaks in the vicinity, Mon khang is not graced with prayer flags or *mani* stones; for centuries the site has been ignored and even reviled, as interviews with local residents has shown.

Type-VII: Isolated pillars

By their very nature pillars set in the ground in isolated places and without inscriptions of any kind are very difficult to identify. Furthermore, these sites have little or no historical oral tradition attached to them, only mythological attributions. It is possible that certain specimens were erected inside enclosures, but there is no visual evidence of this remaining. The cultural history of Tibet indicates that isolated columns could have been erected for the following reasons: *(1)* as boundary markers; *(2)* political monuments of clans or chieftains; *(3)* as funerary monuments; *(4)* to worship indigenous spirits; and *(5)* to subdue negative beings and influences arising from the earth. As has been noted, the erection of megalithic stones and other lithic monuments such as *la btsas* (cairns) in the pre-Buddhist period was tied to 'primitive' Bon cults (Macdonald 1953).

(L-216; P-VIIa) Name: rDo ring sPun gsum (Three Brothers Long Stones). Location: Nya tshang gzhung, gSer lung township, dPal mgon county.

This site consists of three stelae that were erected in isolation in the middle of a plain, which in part is called Nya tshang gzhung (Fish Abode Land). rDo ring sPun gsum are well known throughout the gNam ru region, and such monuments in the eastern Byang thang are uncommon. Although they are considered sacred, at least in part because of their great age, little is known of their origins.

The three dark-colored and heavily worn pillars form a triangular pattern measuring between 2.1 and 2.5 meters on each of its three sides. The stones have been the object of butter offerings (*mar mchod*), and scarves and *mani* plaques have been placed on and around them. The most southerly *rdo ring* is tabular, while the other two are more rounded in shape. The dimensions of the stones are as follows: height 95 centimeters (top broken away), basal girth 70 centimeters; height 65 centimeters, basal girth 80 centimeters; and height one meter, basal girth 95 centimeters.

(L-217; P-VIIb) Name: rDo phur (Stone Dagger). Location: Bar tsho, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

This lone gray pillar stands on a terrace on the east shore of Nyer mTsho (also called sMan lcam dKar mo) (elevation 4430 meters). According to local folklore, it is a primordial monument (*srid pa chags pa'i rdo ring*). The heavily eroded and darkened appearance of the pillar leaves little doubt that this indeed is an old monument. However, the cultural and physical indications are not sufficient in themselves to attribute this stone to the pre-Buddhist period with any degree of certainty. This four-sided *rdo ring* is 75 centimeters in height and has a basal girth of 95 centimeters.

(L-218; P-VIIc) Name: Nag thogs rDo ring (Black Assembly Long Stones). Location: near the confluence of the Ra ma and sKed dkar valleys, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

A row of six pillars oriented north to south are found at this site (elevation 4810 meters). According to local sources, Nag tshogs rDo ring is supposed to be a primordial monument. Despite it often being the case, there is no visible evidence that these stones stood inside an enclosure, nor are other archaeological elevations visible in the area. The four unbroken *rdo ring* are three and four-sided and range in height from 40 to 85 centimeters. The heavily weathered *rdo ring* have turned a reddish tan color from their base color of gray. The stones are unhewn and consequently have irregular faces.

(L-219; P-VIId) Name: Srib ra rDo ring. Location: near the confluence of the Srib ra and Ra ma valleys, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

This solitary four-sided pillar is the only one made of limestone that the author has surveyed to date (elevation 4870 meters). The closest limestone outcrop is situated about one kilometer from the *rdo ring*. The light-colored pillar is 80 centimeters tall and has a basal girth of 1.2 meters. The stone has some lichen growth and mineral encrustations on it, indicating that it has been standing for a significant period of time, as local sources maintain.

Type-VIII: Stelae erected inside a rectangular enclosure

This type of monument has widespread distribution from Nag tshang west to Ru thog, and south to the southern slopes of the Gangs dkar Transhimalaya range. Its high occurrence and uniform characteristics help to define a broad ethnohistorical region equated with the ancient Zhang zhung-Mon culture. The monument is typified by one or more stelae set on the west side of an enclosure that is usually oriented in the cardinal directions. The stelae or pillars are between 40 centimeters and 2.3 meters in height and can be three-sided, four-sided, tabular or irregular in shape, reflecting differing degrees of working the stones and localized conceptions about the monuments. The pillars are made from various types of igneous and metamorphic rocks, and where there is more than one in an enclosure contrasting types and colors of stones were often employed. Multiple pillars (up to one dozen) are arrayed in a row along the west wall of the enclosure, and can also extend a short distance along the north and south walls. The enclosures consist of walls 50 to 90 centimeters in width that form rectangular enclosures four to 12 meters in length (east to west). The average width of the structures is approximately 60 percent of the length. The enclosing walls are generally level with the ground, but in some instances stones protrude prominently from the surface. The better preserved enclosures indicate that they were constructed to a maximum height of not much more than 50 centimeters. These monuments are most frequently set on level ground in broad valleys or lake basins.

Local sources ascribe the stelae inside a rectangular enclosure typology to Mon funerary monuments,[1] as well as conferring upon them various mythological attributions. Their identification in the oral tradition with burial culture, combined with their not infrequent association with grave typologies (slab graves, mounds and various perimeter typologies) is strong circumstantial evidence that they indeed had a funerary function. However, it is not at all certain that they functioned as tombs; the lack of evidence at the sites for excavation and pilferage suggests that they did not. More plausibly, they were erected as commemorative structures for deceased chieftains, priests and / or other notable members of local clans. Many dozens must have been built all over Upper Tibet west of gNam ru, but certainly not anywhere near the quantity that would indicate use by individual commoners. If they were designed with a more inclusive purpose, they would perforce have to represent a collective group such as an entire clan or tribe.

The special character of the enclosed pillars is also indicated by the fact that at each site only one, or occasionally two, enclosures are found. The erection of these monuments must have served as demonstrations of temporal power and social prestige by linking the tribal elite with their ancestral rulers (Bellezza 2001: 36).[2] The localized clan or cultic nature of the pillar monuments is suggested by their diffuse distribution throughout the region. The prominent social and ritual role played by the pillars is clearly shown by their presence in virtually all areas of ancient settlement. Their universal inclusion is also further evidence of the early state or tribal confederation with common ethnological characteristics, which existed in Upper Tibet west of gNam ru in the Zhang zhung-Mon period.

Stelae ornamented with solar symbols erected at burial sites can be traced back to the Okunev culture of south Siberia (middle of Second Millennium BCE) (Okladnikov 1990: 81, 82). Graves of the south Siberian early Tagar culture (8th to 6th centuries BCE) feature quadrangular fences made of standing slabs with pillars, around one meter in height, set in the corners of the enclosure (Bokovenko 1995b: 299, 300; Gryaznov 1969: 213-215). In the First Millennium BCE, pillars and columns erected in the vicinity of slab graves and *kurgans* as kinds of funerary monuments, are very well known in the eastern steppes.[3] These deeply buried 'guard-stones' or 'hitching posts' are found to the east of the graves at a short distance (Okladnikov 1990: 87), as well as on the corners of the slab graves (Volkov 1995: 325). It is hypothesized, judging from the dress of anthropomorphous figures and the weapons carved on the deer stones, that they were erected as an expression of the cult of heroized ancestor-warriors (Okladnikov 1990: 89).

The raising of deer stones in the eastern steppes, particularly the plain, not perforated, variety, represents a funerary practice with close physical parallels to the stelae erected inside a rectangular enclosure typology of Upper Tibet. Pillars in both the steppes and high plateau are found in association with cemeteries. Moreover, in Mongolia, pillars mostly devoid of carvings were sometimes erected inside small square enclosures aligned

1. On the UTCE reports of the funerary nature of the pillars were persistent, adding to similar reports obtained by the author on earlier expeditions.
2. This also seems to be borne out by reference to early Bon practitioners of the gShen clan worshipping *rgan lha* (probably ancestors), as well as the custom of setting up pillars at the time of making an oath (*mtho rtsig*) mentioned in the *Old Tibet Chronicle* and on the stele of 730 (Stein 1972: 200, 201, 233).
3. Carved and unornamented pillars (predominating in the west), sometimes in large groups called deer stones (Russian: *olenniye kamni*), are numerous in Mongolia, Transbaikalia, Kazakhstan, Chita and Kirghizia (Askarov *et al.* 1992: 467, 468; Okladnikov 1990: 89; Khudiakov 1987). Deer stones, which appeared in Tuva, Mongolia and the Altai in the 9th or 8th century BCE, decorated with galloping reindeer, sun discs and weapons, have much in common with the Scytho-Siberian animal style found in other representational art mediums (Ishjmats 1994: 152; Askarov *et al.* 1992: 468). They are most numerous in Mongolia, where more than 500 have been reported at burial complexes and the sites of funerary banquets (Bokovenko 1995a: 271, 272).

in the cardinal directions.[4] For example, at Ulangom in northwestern Mongolia, a slab grave Scytho-Siberian cemetery contains a 1.55 meter tall unornamented stele erected in the center of a rectangular enclosure aligned with the compass points, which has a maximum length of 2.15 meters (Novgorodova *et al.* 1982: 27, 97). Although these enclosures are smaller than those found in Upper Tibet and were constructed from a single line of stones set in the ground edgewise,[5] it proves that this general architectural form had a First Millennium BCE precedent as a funerary monument in the eastern steppes. The morphological characteristics and elevations of unperforated deer stones found in groups and associated with low mounds (Novgorodova 1980: figs. 67, 95), are very similar to their Upper Tibetan counterparts.

These types of close physical correspondences can only be attributable to cultural affinities between the steppes and high plateau of Tibet. However, the exact nature and period in which this cultural diffusion took place is still obscure. The chronology established for the deer stones and slab graves of the steppes suggests these types of monuments may also have appeared in Upper Tibet in the First Millennium BCE. If we exclude the hypothesis that slab graves and pillars erected in enclosures of Upper Tibet are of indigenous or antecedent origin, these variants would appear to represent the adoption of a major Scytho-Siberian cultural trait into the region. While the deer stones and slab graves of Mongolia fell into disuse more than two millennia ago, there is no indication when these analogous monuments became extinct in Upper Tibet. Perhaps in the more isolated northern plains of Tibet they survived as a relict cultural trait through the Imperial period.

(L-220; P-VIIIa) Name: Ma g.yo rDo ring (Long Stone of Ma g.yo) or Ma g.yo Ka ba (Pillar of Ma g.yo). Location: In the rDo ring valley, in view of the sacred mountain Ma g.yo Ka ba,[6] Ma g.yo township, Shen rtsa county.

This single, light-colored stele is surrounded by a small mound of earth and stones; a 75 centimeter section of the stone is visible above the mound. The *rdo ring* has four sides of roughly equal width and a basal girth of one meter. Only small sections of the 60 centimeter thick wall that enclosed it are visible. This perimeter is roughly aligned to the intermediate compass points and measures six meters by 4.2 meters. The existence of this monument pushes east the distribution of the stelae erected inside a rectangular enclosure typology to 88 degrees, 24 minutes east longitude. In the mythology of the region, Ma g.yo rDo ring is perceived as having appeared at the dawn of creation (*srid pa chags pa'i rdo ring*). It is also a shrine for the elemental spirits: the *klu* are said to inhabit the buried part of the pillar while the *btsan* occupy the above ground section. These spirits and the monument itself are under the auspices of the *yul lha* Ma g.yo Ka ba located at the head of the rDo ring valley.

4. For some illustrated examples see Khudiakov 1987, p. 150, diagram 7, p. 157, diagram 11.
5. This type of wall construction is also found at a few of the stelae sites of Upper Tibet.
6. The *sTong rgyung brngan bsang chen mo'i gzhung 'phrin* records that in the land of gZi there is the mountain of Ma g.yo Ka ba (folio 13b). This text of 19 folios is attributed to the Zhang zhung master sTong rgyung mThu chen, who is said to have written it to appease the native spirits of Tibet, which were creating havoc with the construction of bSam yas. It was rediscovered in Khams by Drung mu Ha ra in the 11th century. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdag, Ma g.yo or Ma yo reflects Zhang zhung orthography. In a political map of the TAR (*Bod rang skyong ljongs srid 'dzin sa khul gyi sa bkra*), an alternative spelling is used: Mar yo. This spelling reflects local pronunciation.

(L-221; P-VIIIb) Name: dPal mo rDo phur (dPal mo's Stone Dagger). Location: Southwest corner of 'Ur ru mTsho, Nyi ma county.

This large site is dominated by two complexes of stelae erected within large rectangular enclosures, as well as other types of structures (elevation 4600 meters). The morphological characteristics of the visible elevations at dPal mo rDo phur are probably indicative of a cultic funerary site that may have existed in conjunction with a settlement. The monument is situated in the vicinity of a modern *'brog pa* village and a high volume spring called Lu ma dKar mo, in a well drained sloping plain, sandwiched between a mountain called rDo ring and the extensive pasture-lands abutting 'Ur ru mTsho. The excellent geographic endowment of the site must, at least in part, explain the founding of dPal mo rDo phur.

dPal mo rDo phur is named for the Ge sar epic heroine A thag Klu mo (also called A thag dPal mo, A thag Lha mo and A stag Klu mo), although it is unclear how she was supposed to have used the site. In the localized epic tradition this manifestation of the great protectress dPal ldan Lha mo is said to have owned nine lakes in the central Byang thang including 'Ur ru mTsho. Like many other Pre-Buddhist sites, the identity of dPal mo rDo phur has been uniformly subsumed under the legends of the Ge sar epic. This alteration has had the effect of obliterating the indigenous mythology that at one time would have been associated with this monument.

The North rDo ring complex features a single pillar 1.65 meters in height with a basal girth of 1.3 meters, whose highly weathered surface has oxidized a brownish red color. This four-sided stone is planted near the west end of a large enclosure composed of limestone blocks forming walls 50 to 60 centimeters in thickness. In close proximity to the standing stone there appear to be two uprooted specimens lying partially submerged in the ground. The South rDo ring complex, located about 60 meters to the south, consists of two stelae, a beige specimen 1.5 meters in height with a basal girth of one meter, and a dark-colored specimen 1.3 meters in height with a basal girth of 1.4 meters. Both of these standing stones are tabular but the beige-colored specimen has been more finely shaped. The top of the shorter specimen lies in close proximity, and must have added about 45 centimeters to the original height. The break in the stone is thought by local residents to have occurred well back in the pre-Communist period. In addition to the two large *rdo ring*, which are planted near the west wall of the enclosure, there is also a line of four smaller broken specimens (50 centimeters or less in height) situated on the southwest side of the perimeter. The limestone enclosure of South rDo ring measures 11 meters by 19 meters and is not well aligned in the cardinal directions. The relatively well preserved South and North enclosures, their unusually large size and construction from limestone, raise the suspicion that they may have been built more recently than the pillars.

Approximately 45 meters south the South rDo ring complex, at the foot of Mount rDo ring, there is a complex of Mon *dur*-like foundations that measures 22 meters from east to west. It is composed of several cells or partitions. Eighteen meters to the west is a similar complex, measuring 35 meters by 18 meters, which consists of at least seven cells. It is not clear whether these footings supported some type of superstructure. Approximately 85 meters further west is a group of foundation walls covering an area of 250 square meters, and in close proximity, a line of seven highly deteriorated structures resembling graves, each measuring about 2.5 meters by 2.5 meters. West of North rDo ring complex there are two rectangular limestone perimeters at ground level aligned with the cardinal directions, each measuring approximately 17 meters (east to west) by 30 meters (north to south). North of the North rDo ring complex are two mounds, which may have a burial function. The smaller, more southerly example measures 6.5 meters by 6.5 meters and has the remains of a wall around its rim. The larger, rectangular mound is a maximum of 43 meters (north to south) by 12 meters (east to west) and is elevated two to three meters above the plain. West of the mounds there is more structural residuum.

(L-222; P-VIIIc) Name: Tshar skam Byang ma rDo ring. Location: Tshar skam Byang ma, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

This is the site of a vandalized stele that was uprooted, circa 1975, in order to build a now dysfunctional wall, located south of the Mon ra Yar skyed (see pp. 87-88). The four-sided, 1.9 meter long pillar is lying close to where it once stood. Older residents say that it stood about 1.2 meters in height and that small pieces of clear quartz were piled up at the base of the *rdo ring*. Reportedly, clear quartz is not found in the area and had to be carried to the site (this seems to have occurred before living memory), which points to a devotional exercise connected to the pillar. Small sections of the stone enclosure in which the *rdo ring* was erected have survived. In the vicinity, on higher ground, are two typical Mon *ra*; oval-shaped stone enclosures with irregular, heaped stone walls. A little to the south there are reported to be three more Mon *ra*.

(L-223; P-VIIId) Name: Dung rtse rDo ring (Conch Peak Long Stones). Location: Dung rtse, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

There are two stelae located just outside the Las stod township headquarters, in the middle of the valley, on sandy well drained soil. The North rDo ring is four-sided, 95 centimeters tall, and has a basal girth of 1.2 meters. The South rDo ring is located 55 meters to the southeast. This tabular pillar extends 80 centimeters out of the ground and its two narrow sides face east and west. It was erected on the west side of an enclosure aligned in the cardinal directions, which measures 6.5 meters (east to west) by 4.5 meters (north to south). The poorly preserved walls of the enclosure are raised about 50 centimeters above the surrounding terrain.

(L-224; P-VIIIe) Name: A chen rDo ring. Location: A chen, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

This stelae site is situated on a sloping plain overlooking the southwest side of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. Five *rdo ring* are found in an uneven, not well-centered row near the west side of an enclosure. At least three of the pillars have been broken including one recently through vandalism. No mythology about the monument was locally forthcoming. From north to south the characteristics of the stelae are as follows:

(1) broken beige tabular stone, height 30 centimeters, basal girth 85 centimeters;
(2) unevenly-shaped gray stone (gabbro?) oxidized to a reddish color, height 75 centimeters, basal girth 1.1 meters;
(3) same type of stone as number two, broken top with three sides of roughly equal width and a fourth much narrower face, height 60 centimeters, basal girth one meter;
(4) same type of stone as numbers two and three, irregularly-shaped, one meter in height, basal girth 1.5 meters;
(5) dark gray, fine-grained, irregularly-shaped stone, height 70 centimeters, basal girth 80 centimeters.

Much of the walls enclosing the stelae have been obliterated. This structure appears to have been aligned with the cardinal directions and to have measured 16 meters (east to west) by 7.5 meters (north to south). Where measurable the walls of the enclosure are about 80 centimeters thick. Immediately north of the A chen stelae complex there is a rectangular-shaped ruin oriented just off the cardinal directions. Measuring 45 meters (east to west) by 12 meters (north to south), and constructed in three tiers to accommodate the slope gradient, not enough of the regularly built walls have survived to determine whether they supported a building or had some other function. Some local residents refer to this structure as that of an old castle.

(L-225; P-VIIIf) Name: rNya shing rDo ring. Location: rNya shing, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

This site is comprised of a single stele standing on the west side of an enclosure, which is in view of Dang ra g.Yu mtsho. The monument is situated on a wide open slope just in front of an abrupt drop. The *rdo ring* has four sides of roughly equal width, and has a basal girth and height of 70 centimeters. Sections of all but the north perimeter wall are intact and there appears to be a wall dividing the enclosure east to west into two halves. Wall thickness is between 60 and 70 centimeters. The enclosure probably measured five meters (east to west) by 4.8 meters (north to south). The horns of slaughtered goats and sheep were placed around the pillar, evidently in a herd augmentation rite. This transpired before the current residents of rNya shing arrived a few years back.

(L-226; P-VIIIg) Name: Ra ser khog rDo ring (Yellow Goat Carcass Long Stones). Location: Ra ser khog, Las stod township, Nyi ma county.

This is another of the *rdo ring* sites located in the Las stod valley. There are two light-colored stelae at Ra ser khog located on a moderate slope below the ridge-top. One of them has four uneven sides and is 90 centimeters tall with a basal girth of one meter. The other pillar is tabular, 60 centimeters in height and 90 centimeters around at the base. These two *rdo ring* appear to have been erected inside an enclosure but only a small portion of the east and south walls are visible.

(L-227; VIIIh) Name: rDo ring dMar mo (Female Red Long Stones). Location:

overlooks the 'Bog gtsang po, A zur township, Nyi ma county.

rDo ring dMar mo is another example of a pillar monument with a variety of companion structures. The extent of the ruins found here encourages the view that this was an important pre-Buddhist funerary and / or domiciliary site. The large river and nearby cliffs seem to account for the ancient appeal of the site. According to the not well articulated local lore, rDo ring dMar mo was constructed by the ancient Mon pa.

rDo ring dMar mo is named for and visually dominated by a pillar 1.5 meters in height with a basal girth of 1.7 meters. The stone has two broad sides; the north side has weathered to a reddish color while the south face is beige in color. There is no sign of an enclosure around the pillar but to the north there is a line of four lesser *rdo ring* ranging in height from 30 centimeters to 75 centimeters. The five *rdo ring* form a line 8.7 meters in length. In close proximity to the pillars there is a well built double-coursed foundation that measures 5.5 meters (north to south) by nine meters (east to west). Nearby are the vestiges of other small foundations, including one with a one meter tall rocky mound situated in the middle of it. East of the *rdo ring* are remnants of contiguous wall footings covering an area of approximately 1300 square meters. Among these remains is a foundation aligned in the cardinal directions that measures nine meters (north to south) by 14 meters (east to west). This well built structure, like others at the site, could conceivably have supported a building of some type. Further east are the vestiges of other wall footings covering an extensive area. At another river valley site, located several hundred meters to the west, there is a small group of obscured foundations.

(L-228; P-VIIIi) Name: rDo ring lCags ra (Walled rDo ring). Location: rDo ring lCags ra, A zur township, Nyi ma county.

rDo ring lCag ra is another example of pillars planted in the midst of other types of structures indicative of a large pre-Buddhist ritual funerary complex. As per the common mythology associated with such monuments, the *rdo ring* are said to have appeared with the creation of the world. Residents of A zur township also believe that rDo ring lCags ra was constructed by the Mon pa, that elusive group of people who dominate the prehistoric ethnology of the region in *'brog pa* culture.

From the east or upper end of the site, the view west is first dominated by two large pillars and then by the gradually sloping valley that terminates at a formidable mountain ridge in the distance. This mountain, the local *yul lha*, is now called g.Yung drung Lha btsan but according to local residents, its old name was bTsan bla Yar ro (spelling?). This visual alignment may possibly have had significance to the ancient builders of the monument.

The large gray-green speckled (diorite?) *rdo ring* that gives its name to the site stands 1.9 meters tall and has a basal girth of 1.5 meters (elevation 4900 meters). This pillar has two broad sides 50 centimeters to 75 centimeters in width, and two narrow sides 10 centimeters to 24 centimeters in width. The broad sides of the stone are set in a north-south direction. There is another *rdo ring* 2.2 meters to the south measuring 1.2 meters in height with a basal girth of 95 centimeters. These two standing stones are fixed one meter west of a fragmentary enclosure that measures approximately six meters

by six meters. This enclosure appears to consist of six parallel walls, 95 centimeters to 1.45 meters apart, running in an east-west direction (although they are not well aligned in the compass points). Each wall is composed of two lines of stones 15 centimeters to 35 centimeters in length, laid 15 to 45 centimeters apart, which are set into the ground edgewise.[7]

Approximately 25 meters north of the twin pillars there is a broken specimen cut to 90 centimeters in height. Four pieces of the same type of stone, three of them more than one meter in length, lie in close proximity. In addition to the standing stones there are a number of other structures at rDo ring lCags ra. Among them are several foundations lying about 50 meters north of the broken *rdo ring*. These include an enclosure aligned in the cardinal directions measuring six meters (east to west) by ten meters (north to south), elevated about 70 centimeters above ground level and an oval-shaped foundation 7.5 meters across flush with the ground. About 150 meters further north, on the right edge of the valley, there is another foundation that measures 15 meters by nine meters, as well as other minor structures.

Approximately 120 meters west or down valley of the pillars, near the eponymous two house settlement, are various walls covering an area that measures 30 meters by 24 meters, which seemed to have formed three irregularly-shaped discrete structures. The massive walls found here are built of parallel courses of stones set edgewise in the ground spaced 60 centimeters to one meter apart (Tibetan slab grave typology). Individual stones attain nearly one meter in length and protrude 20 centimeters to 60 centimeters from the surface. The fact that the stones in the foundations are set on their edge and not evenly spaced apart clearly indicates that they did not support superstructures. In the nearby vicinity is another parallel slab wall structure that measures 8.5 meters by 8.5 meters. These walls are made up of slabs up to 80 centimeters in length set 60 to 90 centimeters apart. In closer proximity to the homesteads there are fragmentary sections of even more massively built slab walls. Individual stones in these walls are up to 1.2 meters in length. The two houses and nearby contemporary corrals seem to have obliterated some of the structures.

Several hundred meters down valley from the superficial remains of rDo ring lCags ra there is an all-stone habitation (*rdo khang*) built into the recess of a cliff. This ruined structure is well known in the region and is said to be very ancient. The interior dimensions of this one room structure are 1.9 meters by 3.2 meters. Exterior walls reach 2.2 meters in height and interior walls 1.8 meters. On top of the west wall several corbels are *in situ,* as are a couple of roof slabs that cover them. Several other roof slabs lay on the ground inside the structure. Nearby there is an elevated foundation built into the base of the cliff that measures 4.5 meters by 7.5 meters. Local residents believe that the *rdo khang, rdo ring* and other structures at rDo ring lCags ra are chronologically and culturally related, which seems a plausible supposition.

7. Pillars in close proximity to finely built walls composed of stones set in the ground on their edges are also found at 'O ma rDo ring and Shangs rDo ring (Bellezza 2000: 46, 47; 2001: 165-167).

(L-229; P-VIIIj) Name: Sag the rDo ring. Location: near Sag the monastery, g.Yu gtog township, sGer rtse county.

At this site there are eight *rdo ring* erected in an enclosure situated a couple hundred meters south of the Karma bKa' brgyud monastery of Sag the. The prevailing mythology attached to the monument is that it arose with the creation of the universe. Nevertheless, one astute elderly monk opined that Sag the rDo ring was founded before the time of the Imperial period *chos rgyal*. It is told that in the late 1980s, the late distinguished rNying ma lama, Shes rab rGyal mtshan, coming from Brag g.Yer pa, in central Tibet, visited the site and pronounced the *rdo ring* holy, and advised the monks of Sag the not to disturb the stones.

The eight standing stones form a U-shaped pattern near the west side of a rectangular enclosure set in the middle of a wide valley. They are positioned as follows: two against the north wall, three on the west wall and three on the south wall. The pillars are between 60 centimeters and 85 centimeters in height, not including a tabular specimen broken near the base. Six of the *rdo ring* are large light-colored irregularly-shaped stones with basal girths of up to 1.4 meters, while the remaining two are tabular and made from a darker type of rock. The enclosure is aligned with the cardinal directions and measures 12.2 meters (east to west) by 6.8 meters (north to south). The thickness of the walls comprising the perimeter averages 60 centimeters to 70 centimeters. In the center of the east wall of the enclosure a 60 centimeter long stone was set perpendicular to the other stones as if to create an 'entranceway.'

(L-230; P-VIIIk) Name: Na ma lung rDo ring. Location: Na ma lung, Tshwa ka township, dGe rgyas county.

What must have been one of the most stunning examples of the stelae erected in a quadrangular enclosure typology is found in the Na ma lung valley (elevation 4520 meters). Only the largest single specimen of the group of more than five stelae that stood at this site 40 years ago is still anchored in the ground. Its counterparts were destroyed in the 1960s, during the failed agricultural project instituted in the Na ma lung valley. The following story is told about the site: during the life time of the 15th Karma pa, a locally revered lama named mTshams pa Kun dga' rDo rje paid a visit to Na ma lung rDo ring. Upon his arrival one of the three large standing stones known as Rigs gsum mgon po broke in two pieces. This was taken to mean that the site was haunted by the *lha 'dre* spirits. After subduing these troublesome entities, the lama magically replaced the top of the broken stone. The Na ma lung monument is called *srid pa chags pa'i rdo ring* by native *'brog pa* for its putative primordial origins.

The *in situ rdo ring*, at 2.35 meters, is the tallest pillar surveyed by the author in Upper Tibet to date. This well-hewn, dark gray, tabular stone is 50 centimeters wide and averages 12 centimeters in thickness. The sole surviving pillar at Na ma lung now functions as a prayer flag mast. Along with two other large pillars, this *rdo ring* formed a monument named after the three primary *bodhisattvas*: Rigs gsum mgon po. In addition to the Rig gsum mgon po rDo ring there are reported to have been several smaller companion stones. Walls said to have existed on the site have been completely effaced. At the edge of the old farm fields, one of the *rdo ring*, 2.3 meters in length, lies prostrate.

There are also smaller pieces of the other pillars found scattered around the vicinity. Like the sole surviving member of the group, these dislodged stones were finely hewn into a tabular shape.

(L-231; P-VIIIl) Name: rDo ring dKar mo (White Female Long Stones). Location: Bar tsho, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

rDo ring dKar mo consists of a single, unevenly spaced row of nine pillars, nine meters in length (plus a tiny 10th specimen), aligned in a southwest-northeast direction (elevation 4460 meters). In addition to the standing stones, there is one prostrate integral specimen and around six large pieces of old stelae lying at the site. Most of the *rdo ring* are made of white granite that has weathered a reddish color. The tallest stele is 1.2 meters in height and undamaged but five of the other specimens are broken. The pillars are either three-sided or four-sided and some appear to have been hewn into shape, while others look like naturally occurring stones. On the west side of the pillars there is a double-coursed wall 70 centimeters in thickness with individual stones protruding as much as 30 centimeters above the surface. This wall may be evidence to show that the *rdo ring* originally sat inside an enclosure, as is frequently encountered throughout western Tibet.

(L-232; P-VIIIm) Name: Me 'bar rDo ring (Blazing Long Stone). Location: sKed dkar valley, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

This site consists of a stele set inside an enclosure that is more or less aligned with the intermediate points of the compass (elevation 4800 meters). This monument shares its name with a red hill immediately to the north. The pillar occupies an unusual aspect in that it was built on the shoulder of a ridge overlooking the sKed dkar and Ra ma valleys, instead of in a valley bottom or plain. Some local sources call Me 'bar rDo ring a *srid pa chags pa* monument.

The main *rdo ring* is tabular in shape, 1.2 meters in height, and has a basal girth of one meter. The pillar has weathered to different colors on its southeast and northwest faces. Also set near the rear (southwest) wall of the enclosure is another *rdo ring* 40 centimeters in height. The enclosure measures 6.5 meters by 3.4 meters, and parts of all four walls have survived. These 50 centimeter thick walls are composed of red and blue volcanic stones up to 85 centimeters in length laid in parallel courses. The northeast wall of this structure is prominently raised above the level of the slope and incorporates two large stones that protrude 50 centimeters from the ground, while the southwest wall is flush with the slope.

(L-233; P-VIIIn) Name: sMon lam rDo ring (Benediction Long Stones). Location: near Shangs Klu khang, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

This site, damaged in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, consists of two standing pillars and three or four uprooted specimens (elevation 4600 meters). It is situated on the opposite side of the valley from the limestone formations of the Shangs Klu khang monastery.[8]

8. Archaeological sites at this location were previously surveyed by the author. See Bellezza 2000, p. 20, 21; 2001, pp. 99, 100.

The four-sided standing stones at sMon lam rDo ring measure 1.4 meters and one meter in height with basal girths of 1.2 and one meter respectively. The two unbroken prostrate specimens are 1.3 meters and 1.6 meters in length. Immediately east of the standing stones are eight irregularly-spaced walls flush with the ground extending a maximum of 12.4 meters to the east. Spanning a distance of six meters (north to south), these eight walls are constructed of single courses of stones, ten centimeters to 30 centimeters in length, which are embedded into the ground edgewise. These fragmentary walls are well aligned in the cardinal directions.

(L-234; P-VIIIo) Zhing lung rDo ring (Farm Valley Long Stones). Location: Zhing lung, gZhung pa township.

This site is situated up valley from an eponymous defunct agricultural area (4720 meters).[9] Zhing lung rDo ring consists of two groups of pillars that sit on the west side of what are now highly fragmentary enclosures, as well as several 'Mon *dur*'. The site was reportedly vandalized during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

At Zhing lung rDo ring East there are three standing stones: *(1)* dark gray volcanic stone, height 90 centimeters, basal girth 80 centimeters; *(2)* dark gray volcanic stone, height 95 centimeters, basal girth 90 centimeters; and 3) dark-colored stone weathered to a red color, height 70 centimeters, basal girth 1.1 meters. At the site there are also three unbroken dislodged specimens 1.2 to 1.5 meters in length. The enclosure constructed from small pieces of limestone seems to measure 11 meters (east to west) by 5.5 meters (north to south). Only small segments of the east, south and north walls of this structure are discernible. To the west of rDo ring East are two quadrangular Mon *dur* enclosures. Measuring 11 meters by nine meters and seven meters by seven meters, the walls of these disintegrated structures are around 70 centimeters in thickness. Individual stones in the walls protrude upwards of 40 centimeters from the ground.

Zhing lung rDo ring West is located approximately 200 meters west of its counterpart. There are five standing stones, plus two much smaller examples, forming a row six meters in length situated near the fragmentary west wall of the enclosure. The characteristics of the five main *rdo ring* are as follows:

(1) gray, four irregular sides, height 70 centimeters, basal girth 90 centimeters;
(2) dark gray, tabular, height 60 centimeters, basal girth 70 centimeters;
(3) broken four-sided specimen, the broken top lies near the *in situ* base of the pillar, original height approximately 1.3 meters;
(4) four irregular sides, height 60 centimeters but originally probably taller, basal girth 45 centimeters;
(5) tan igneous specimen, height 60 centimeters, basal girth 90 centimeters.

There are also three or four broken *rdo ring* strewn around the rDo ring West site. Only small pieces of the enclosure are visible, especially on the east and south sides of the structure. The east wall fragment is found ten meters east of the stelae. North and west of rDo ring West are the remains of four rectangular Mon *dur* of the same type as those found at Zhing lung rDo ring East.

9. Reference to defunct agriculture at this site is found in Bellezza 2001, p. 100.

(L-235; P-VIIIp) Name: Khams chen rDo ring (Great Territory Long Stones) (spelling?). Location: up valley from the old 'Bur gung township headquarters, dGe rgyas county.

This site is found on level sandy ground on the left edge of a broad valley. Set on the southwest side of an enclosure, the intact pillar measures one meter in height and has a basal girth of 80 centimeters. There is also a broken *rdo ring* 45 centimeters in height in close proximity. The enclosure, which is not aligned in the cardinal directions, measures 7.5 meters by 3.5 meters. It is in relatively good condition and most sections of its walls are intact. Nearby there is a structure of the Mon *dur* typology measuring 1.2 meters by 2.7 meters composed of a single line of slabs sticking about 30 centimeters out of the ground. In close proximity there is a six meter long wall segment, built of parallel rows of stones up to 80 centimeters in length that conspicuously project from the ground.

Type-IX: Monolithic arrays with accompanying edifices

Another very distinctive type of pre-Buddhist monument in Upper Tibet consists of parallel rows of pillars (*rdo ring*) aligned in the cardinal directions and set in quadrangular concourses on the east side of an appended building. These concourses can be anywhere from 50 to perhaps 4000 square meters in area. The standing stones or stelae are usually tabular and average between 30 and 60 centimeters in height. The broad sides of the pillars usually face north to south while the thin sides are aligned to form long rows oriented east to west. At some sites it appears that the concourse of standing stones was subdivided by slabs of stone set into the ground edgewise. The appended edifices are also aligned in the cardinal directions and are situated just west of the pillars.[1] Like the concourses of standing stones these edifices vary greatly in size and range from a few meters to more than 50 meters in length.

The peculiar physical characteristics of the monolithic array, with an accompanying edifice typology (rows of standing stones and the extremely thick walls of the edifices creating small internal chambers) combined with a fairly strong oral tradition that attributes these as Mon cemeteries, indicate that they functioned as necropolises. This is buttressed by a number of reports I have received of human bones washing out from the ground at these types of sites. Unquestionably, the orientation of the site plan with the points of the compass was a reflection of the symbolic and ritual systems of the builders. As I have mentioned in previous works, pre-Buddhist astronomical and astrological beliefs are incumbent in this alignment, but the particulars of the highly obscure traditions involved are extremely difficult to discern from extant physical evidence. The crux of the problem is that there is no satisfactory method of assigning specific physical features of the monolithic arrays with symbolic or quantifiable criteria that can be empirically correlated to celestial objects.[2]

The edifices accompanying the rows of pillars appear to have been a type of ancestral

1. At the Imperial period necropolis of Lebri, in southern Tibet, the ruins of a clay building that probably functioned as an ancestral temple are also oriented on an east-west axis (Mortari Vergara Caffarelli 1997: 238).
2. This inherent obstacle in the field of archaeoastronomy is discussed in some detail in Saunders 1993.

temple cum burial chamber unique to Upper Tibet. They have both internal and external walls creating structures that in the larger specimens were two or more meters thick. Walls were built of coursed rubble, and in the larger edifices, courses laid horizontally were interspersed with stones placed diagonally to produce a herring-bone pattern. Walls frequently also contain occasional courses of thin bondstones. The geographic distribution of the monolithic arrays matches those of the slab graves and pillars erected inside a rectangular enclosure typology, as well as the primary distribution of the all-stone buildings and fortresses. All of these typologies, with their common territorial extent and high level of distribution, belong to the same cultural milieu and display strikingly uniform constructional and design characteristics. Taken in total these monuments are proof that much of Upper Tibet was occupied by the same ethnohistorical group in the pre-Buddhist period; what we have called the Zhang zhung-Mon cultural entity. The monumental monolithic arrays in particular, which required large levels of organizational skill and manpower, are further evidence hinting at the existence of a pre-Buddhist state in Upper Tibet, probably based on a clan or tribal confederation.

At individual sites one to six complexes of concourses of pillars and accompanying edifices are found. The large variations in the sizes of these monuments cannot be explained in obvious environmental terms, with areas better endowed in natural resources giving rise to larger monuments. In southern Tibet there was a clear trend to larger and more elaborate burial mounds in the later phases of the protohistorical and early historical periods. Similarly, in Upper Tibet, chronological factors may be at play with the larger specimens being produced at a later date. At the southern Tibet Judai burial site (7th to 9th century), situated on the north side of the main tomb, M1, there are 15 parallel rows of standing stones interspersed with shallow graves for horses and other animals.[3] The adjacent tomb M20 has a smaller row of stones to its north. These rows of standing stones, despite the extensive size of the Judai necropolis, are not as extensive nor as centrally placed as those in the monolithic arrays of Upper Tibet. It would appear that this not very common feature in southern Tibet owed its inspiration to Upper Tibet and its highly developed network of necropolises in which arrays of pillars occupied a central position.

Early precedents for large groups of funerary pillars are found in the steppes, and certain cultural interconnections are probably indicated. For example, cemeteries of the Tagar culture (7th to 1st century BCE) are marked by groups of pillars each containing dozens to several hundred specimens (Gryaznov 1969: 214). At Ichianli, in northwestern Turkestan, there are parallel arched rows of standing slabs on the east and west sides of a monumental stone building, which measures 35 meters by 40 meters.[4] This ostensible cult center for early nomadic tribes is thought to date between the 5th and 2nd century BCE. Comparative archaeological data from Central Asia and southern Tibet therefore suggests that the monolithic arrays of Upper Tibet originated as early as the First Millennium BCE and continued to be a feature of the highland culture until the

3. For a description of this site see Mortari Vergara Caffarelli 1997, p. 235, 238.
4. Abetekov and Yusupov 1994, *op cit.*; p. 31

Imperial period, or perhaps until its collapse in the mid-9th century. However, it is not likely that the larger monolithic arrays (and the political and organizational prowess they symbolized) could have been founded after the defeat of the Zhang zhung kingdom in the mid-7th century and the definitive shifting of political power to southern Tibet. A precise periodization will only be possible when we can assemble the requisite chronometric data from various sites.

(L-236; P-IXa; P-IXb) Name: rKyang rtswa mdo Gyang ro (Ruins of Onager Grass Confluence). Location: Gad mar chu valley, Ma g.yo township, Shen rtsa county.

This site, located near the junction of two valleys, boasts a very large example of a monolithic array with an appended edifice. The sheer size of the concourse on which the array of standing stones was erected at rKyang rtswa mdo Gyang ro suggests that it was a major constituent part of the Zhang zhung-Mon pre-Buddhist ritual infrastructure of Upper Tibet.

Unfortunately, in the last 20 years, this important archaeological site has been decimated by the local population intent on building corrals and homes. The stones extracted from the site were sufficient in number to construct various contemporary structures including a large enclosure for winter pasturage. Tibetans' ignorance and disregard of their pre-Buddhist heritage aside, the reason rKyang rtswa mdo Gyang ro suffered so badly is that it is located in the midst of a well populated area of prime pastures. Consequently, not one *rdo ring* stands fully intact and only a few small sections of coherent walls are visible in the building that accompanied the standing stones. In contrast, many other monolithic arrays are isolated from contemporary settlement.

rKyang rtswa mdo Gyang ro is also of special significance because it is the most eastern example of the typology found to date. Situated at 88 degrees, 22 minutes east longitude, this site is poised on the eastern fringes of the territory (eastern Nag tshang) ascribed to the ancient Mon in the legends of Upper Tibet. According to local oral tradition, Gyang rtswa mdo Gyang ro is associated with the Ge sar epic in two capacities: *(1)* as the southern fort of the heroine A thag Klu mo,[5] and *(2)* the place where the head of the giant soul yak (*bla 'brong*) of the demonic ruler bDud Klu btsan was buried. The *rdo ring* are said to be the bones and flesh of this beast. The only true historical significance of these legends is that they serve to confirm that the site belongs to the pre-Buddhist cultural phase of Upper Tibetan civilization.

rKyang tshwa mdo Gyang ro is unusual for this typology in that it was not precisely aligned in the cardinal directions, but more or less oriented in the intermediate points of the compass. Only about 100 broken *rdo ring* remain in a concourse that may have originally contained at least 3000 standing stones. In addition to some stones protruding from the ground, many others were snapped off at ground level; their bases still visible.

5. This belief is part of a widespread legend that identifies various pre-Buddhist archaeological sites with regional castles thought to have belonged to A thag Klu mo. For example, dPal mo rDo rdzong, located in mTsho gnyis county, is often said to be the northern fortress of the goddess. Another ancient complex called Sha sha dPal khang is thought to be the summer headquarters of the goddess (Bellezza 2000: 32; 2001: 128, 129).

The largest single standing pillar has a height and width of 55 centimeters. This specimen is 13 centimeters in thickness and thus was tabular in shape, as per the norm in this type of monument. The *rdo ring* seem to have been mainly made from sandstone in various shades of gray and red. The bases of the extant pillars clearly portray that they were erected in long rows. Like the Yu Kham bu site (see Bellezza 2000: 53, 54; 2001: 179-181), walls created by slabs of stone embedded in the ground edgewise may have subdivided the rectangular array into smaller units. The hard to gauge dimensions of the concourse (in the absence of standing stones) are roughly 80 meters by 54 meters (seemingly the largest surveyed to date by the author). It was constructed on gently sloping ground.

The dimensions of the edifice located immediately west of the concourse of *rdo ring* are about 18 meters by 12 meters. The massively built structure is now four meters in height but originally it may have been much taller. A depression in the middle of the structure points to where the central cavity lay. Chunks of what might have been clear quartzite are reported to have been strewn around rKyang rtswa mdo rGyang ro until they were removed for geological analysis. Immediately southwest of the site are several low-lying tumuli and possibly other structures as well.

(L-237) Name: Chu phur rDo phur (Water Dagger Stone Dagger). Location: Ri dmar township, sGer rtse County.[6]

Four complexes of *rdo ring* and accompanying structures situated on benches below a mountain of the same name are found at this site (elevation 4700 meters). Chu phur rDo phur is situated west of the sTong mTsho basin, but both the lake itself and the *yul lha* of sGer rtse A dmar Rol pa sKya bdun (located west of the lake) are out of view. There are no permanent habitations in the vicinity of the site, which is a good thing as regards its preservation. The preservation of the monument is probably also due to the fairly high esteem and wonder it is held in by residents of sGer rtse. As with so many pre-Buddhist monuments, there are no prayer flags, *mani* stones or any other contemporary physical signs of worship at Chu phur rDo phur.

In sGer rtse there are four common stories connected to Chu phur rDo phur: *(1)* they represent a primordial monument; *(2)* they are where the sGer rtse *yul lha* A dmar Rol pa sKya bdun tied his dogs and wolves; *(3)* the stones are an earth subduing and rain attracting instrument; and 4) the monument was built by the Mon. According to the elder dKon mchog rGyal mtshan of the sGer rtse clan (in personal communication), human bones have washed out from the gullies below the site. He is under the impression that Chu phur rDo phur is a Mon funerary site and that under each of the stones are the remains of a single individual. When he was a youth dKon mchog rGyal mtshan's contemporaries were prevented by local authorities from digging in the vicinity of Chu phur rDo phur lest they disturb the site.

Originally gray in color, the (mostly diorite?) pillars have weathered to a dark reddish brown color (there are also some sandstone specimens). The pillars are mostly tabular

6. Photographs of this site are unavailable.

in shape and are often inclined in a downhill or northerly direction. The unbroken *rdo ring* range in height from 30 centimeters to 70 centimeters (average height about 40 centimeters). Uprooted specimens up to one meter in length are found scattered around the site. The stelae appear to be uncut and are available in appropriate sizes and shapes on the flanks of Mount Chu phur rDo phur. As in many other sites of this typology, the broad sides of the stele face north to south and the thin edges are oriented east to west.

The largest of the four complexes is found on the west side of the site squeezed between two gullies. This array of monoliths is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures 22 meters (east to west) by 13 meters (north to south). At least 50 percent of the stones are missing but it would seem that there were originally approximately 35 rows of stones each with about 35 pillars. The appended structure is located five meters west of the extant field of *rdo ring* and shares the same alignment. Due to extreme degradation of the structure, its external dimensions are difficult to appraise, but nevertheless part of its central chamber is intact and measures 5.3 meters (north to south) by 1.85 meters (east to west). The walls composing the inner chamber are made of alternating horizontal and diagonal layers of coursed-rubble and have been reduced to 70 centimeters or less in height. There is some structural evidence to suggest that the walls of this edifice were about 1.4 meters thick.

Approximately 90 meters northeast of the largest complex, on the far side of the ravine, the three other complexes (north, central and south) form a group set in a line that runs transverse to the angle of the slope. The three edifices accompanying the concourses of monoliths form a row 35 meters in length situated at the edge of the ravine. These structures are not well aligned in the compass points, and, they have been reduced to mounds with only traces of coherent wall segments visible. The three arrays of *rdo ring* are also heavily impacted probably due to erosion and movement of the slope.

Upwards of 70 percent of the pillars in the lowest and most northerly of the three concourses are missing. This array roughly measured 17 meters (east to west) by 13 meters (north to south), while the height of the accompanying edifice is now no more than 1.8 meters (its other dimensions are unclear). On the south side of this concourse of standing stones are the fragments of a wall constructed from two parallel lines of slabs 15 to 40 centimeters in length set into the ground edgewise. About four meters north of the array there is a small isolated group of standing stones. The original extent of the central array of standing stones is unclear as only about 175 of them are *in situ*. The slope that this concourse sits on is uneven probably due to water-borne geomorphologic changes. The central accompanying edifice is situated four meters south of its northern counterpart and measures eight meters (north to south) by 5.5 meters (east to west). Traces of its east and south walls are visible. The upper or most southerly array is also heavily disturbed. Near the appended structure about three dozen stones are left standing, and on the east side of the concourse there are approximately 125 *rdo ring in situ*. The accompanying edifice (reduced to a mound with only tiny sections of integral walls left) measures six meters (east to west) by 7.5 meters (north to south), and is situated eight meters north of the central edifice.

(L-238; P-IXc) Name: Mon dur Lhas (Grave Pens of the Mon). Location: rTsog ra, Lho ma township, sGer rtse county.

This site appears to be that of a nearly obliterated small monolithic array (elevation 4850 meters). However, positive identification is hampered by the absence of uprooted pillars, which are commonplace at many other sites of this typology. Mon dur Lhas is yet another Mon monument or so say local *'brog pa*. It is likely that the nearby abandoned corral was in part constructed from stones removed from the archaeological site.

Overlooking the south side of 'Brong grod mTsho, only about 20 standing stones remain at the monument. About half of these granite pillars form an east-west row at what was ostensibly the south side of the array. There are also two standing stones near the north side of the almost completely depleted array. The tallest *rdo ring* stands 60 centimeters. A survey of the slope and the placement of the standing stones suggests that the concourse may have measured about 13 meters by 15 meters. West of the *rdo ring* the appended structure has been reduced to a rocky tumulus, which measures 13 meters (north to south) by five meters (east to west) and one meter in height. There are however, small segments of coherent walls within the tumulus.

Beginning 25 meters south or uphill of the monolithic array there are several foundations locally called Mon *dur*, which indeed resemble the superstructures of graves. Among the most coherent of them is a rectangular specimen that measures about six meters by three meters, and is divided into two halves by a bisecting wall (single-course quadrangular grave typology). Another well preserved specimen measures 4.5 meters by 4.5 meters). To the north of the Mon dur Lhas monolithic array, at the edge of the lake basin, are at least seven more granite Mon *dur*. The largest of them appears to have been rectangular in shape and was constructed of parallel slab walls set a half meter apart (Tibetan slab grave typology). These slabs stick prominently out of the ground to a height of 50 centimeters. The fully intact east and north wall of this structure are seven and 12 meters respectively in length. Part of the west wall is extant but much of the south wall has been engulfed by a patch of the thorny shrub *gra ma*. Other Mun *dur*, situated several tens of meters to the east, include both single and double slab wall constructions.

(L-239; P-IXd) Name: Sa mig Mon dur (Earth Eye Mon Grave). Location: on the south side of rTa nu mountain, 'O ma township, sGer rtse county.

Situated in a broad valley overlooking rTa rabs mTsho basin are the poorly preserved remains of a monolithic array named after an eye-shaped bowl on the ridge-line above the site (elevation 4500 meters). Like Mon dur Lhas, Sa mig Mon dur is located in a region that was traditionally known as Seng 'khor. The site tapers downwards in an eastern direction towards rTa rabs mTsho, an aspect not unlike that found at the Yu Kham bu monolithic array. Sa mig Mon dur is yet another monument attributed in oral tradition to the ancient Mon. By virtue of its very name Sa mig Mon dur would appear to have funerary connotations.

Originally, the monolithic array may have contained upwards of 1000 standing stones, but only around 20 have survived *in situ*, and most of these are broken at ground level. There are however, a couple intact 50 centimeter tall *rdo ring* still remaining.

Some of the uprooted stones are found at the site but most of them are missing. In what was the concourse of pillars there are small segments of double-coursed slab walls. These are composed of stones 15 centimeters to 40 centimeters in length that were embedded into the ground on their edges. These slab walls probably subdivided the quadrangle of standing stones into various sections. Segments of these walls are found up to 19 meters east of the accompanying structure and these may mark the original eastern extent of the field of standing stones.

The accompanying edifice to the west of the *rdo ring* is aligned in the cardinal directions and measures 4.4 meters (north to south) by 3.5 meters (east to west). Small coherent wall segments up to one meter in height remain, and there is a slight concavity in what was once the central chamber of the monument. Just north of this structure there is an oval-shaped Mon *ra* that measures 26 meters across. Although this structure is not well preserved, 80 centimeter thick double-course perimeter walls are visible in places. In some areas these stones protrude distinctively from the surface of the ground.

(L-240; P-IXe) Name: gNam gyi Ka ba (Sky Pillar). Location: gNam gyi Ka ba, gZhung pa township, dGe rgyas county.

gNam gyi Ka ba is an example of a fairly well preserved smaller monolithic array (elevation 4720 meters). To the southeast and in view of the site there is a high mountain called Khra tshang. Constructed of red and blue volcanic rocks, the concourse of standing stones and accompanying edifice are aligned with the compass points. The slightly inclined concourse measures six meters (north to south) by 17 meters (east to west). Each of the *rdo ring* are 50 centimeters or less in height (the majority of them under 35 centimeters). About 100 of the small pillars are *in situ* including those broken at the base, (less than 50 percent of the original). Their broad sides face north to south. There appear to have originally been nine rows of standing stones spaced 60 centimeters to 80 centimeters apart. Dislodged *rdo ring* 50 to 90 centimeters in length, in fairly substantial numbers, litter the site.

The appended edifice sits almost leveled 1.4 meters west of the group of *rdo ring*. It measures six meters by 5.5 meters and only small fragments of the south wall remain integral. These coherent sections are 40 centimeters tall and contain four vertical courses of masonry. Twenty-three meters west of this structure there is a Mon *dur* that measures 14 meters (north to south) by 4.5 meters (east to west), which was partitioned into several square cells.

Type-X: Monuments of other typologies

(L-241; P-Xa; P-Xb) Name: sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog (Ruined Habitations of Marshy Red Pasture). Location: edge of sPang dmar gZhung, dGe rgyas county.

sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog is one of three large archaeological sites found in the extensive grasslands near the confluence of the Indus and Khri tsho rivers (see pp. 28-30 for the others). However, unlike the hilltop strongholds in the vicinity, the enigmatic structures of sPang dmar Khang gog could not have functioned as habitations. According to local *'brog pa*, these limestone monuments were built by the ancient Mon. Their unusual design and the lack of *mani* stones or other Buddhist symbolism at the site seems to confirm that they belong to the Zhang zhung-Mon period.

Six cubic-shaped edifices and two wall-like structures stand in a line at the edge of sPang dmar gZhung. Not enough is left to clearly determine the interior characteristics of the various structures, but they do not seem to have contained cavities large enough for human habitation and may even have been almost solid. They appear to be ritual or burial constructions of an unknown typology that most resemble *rten mkhar* (structures used in the worship of indigenous and protective deities).The coursed-rubble walls of the taller specimens are constructed without variance from bottom to top. Superficially, the structures resemble the bases of large *mchod rten* but there are significant differences; they do not have bulbous mid-sections nor the variable stone-work or differentially tiered walls characteristic of *mchod rten*. Their original height could not be gauged.

I have numbered the various structures from south to north:

Structure I : measures 3.4 meters (north to south) by 7.5 meters (east to west) and has a maximum height of 1.5 meters.

Structure II : located five meters to the north, measures four meters (east to west) by 7.8 meters (north to south) and has a maximum height of 2.2 meters.

Structure III : located ten meters north of Structure II, measures three meters (east to west) by ten meters (north to south) and has a maximum height of two meters. In front of this structure are wall footings extending ten meters further east. There is also minor structural detritus between Structures III and IV.

Structure IV : situated 14.5 meters north of structure III, measures 4.5 meters

(east to west) by 19 meters (north to south) and has a maximum height of 1.7 meters.

Structure V : located immediately north of Structure IV, measures 44 meters in length and approximately four meters wide (east to west). Although there are a few coherent wall segments attaining 1.5 meters in height, it appears to have been less substantially built than its counterparts to the south.

Structure VI : located 25 meters north of Structure V, measures 31 meters in length by three meters (east to west) in width. It now appears as a long line of rubble without any definite form.

Structure Upper South : located on the rocky slope above the gap between Structures III and IV, measures 3.5 meters (east to west) by nine meters (north to south). Its downhill slope wall rises to 1.9 meters in height while its uphill wall is built into the slope.

Structure Upper North: situated on the hillside above Structure V, measures three meters (east to west) by four meters (north to south) and has a maximum height of 2.6 meters.

Type-XI: Pictographs and petroglyphs

Rock art, both cut (petroglyphs) and painted (pictographs) varieties, is widely distributed over Upper Tibet. This important archaeological asset provides graphic proof of the economic, social, political and religious life of the inhabitants of the region in both the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist epochs. A broad range in themes and styles, and the techniques used to produce them, characterize the distinctive rock art of the region. The sheer beauty and presence of many images infuses the rock art with a powerful aesthetic quality captivating the viewer.

The identification and interpretation of this rock art, however, poses difficulties that will probably never be entirely overcome. The crux of the problem is that we cannot be privy to the sets of motivations and compulsions that impelled the inhabitants of antiquity to produce narratives and symbols in stone. What we can aspire to is the systematic compilation of images from throughout Upper Tibet and their subjection to thorough historical, cultural, comparative and archaeometric analysis. This multidisciplinary approach will yield maximum information on the ancient way of life in the region. However, current rock art studies in Upper Tibet are hampered by the lack of a comprehensive inventory of sites and compositions, and by many technical and financial obstacles to the scientific means of directly sourcing and dating them. These hurdles impede us from realizing the full archaeological potential of this intriguing and valuable resource for the study of ancient Tibetan culture and history.

In this inventory of rock art sites documented on the UTCE, special attention has been paid to thematic and stylistic parallels between Upper Tibet and neighboring regions. In keeping with the comparative methodological approach used in the exposition of the various types of monuments, prehistoric cultural affinities between the rock art of Upper Tibet and the eastern steppes is a main focus of inquiry. The evidence presented corroborates that derived from monument typologies demonstrating that no later than the Central Asian Iron Age cultural exchange between the high plateau and the steppes was taking place. This comparative evidence from rock art and other archaeological sites positing significant linkages between Upper Tibet and the eastern steppes defines a foreign dimension in the Zhang zhung-Mon culture. However, its implications to the ethnohistorical development of Upper Tibet are as yet little understood.

(L-116) bKra shis Do (Good Luck Headland). Location: southeast side of gNam mTsho, 'Dam gzhung county.

In this section we will examine ochre pictographic compositions at bKra shis Do that I have not treated in previous works on the subject.[1] Taken as a whole the rock art of bKra shis Do is a very valuable Tibetan historical and cultural resource that spans both the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods (elevation 4560 meters). The earliest pictographs may date to the end of the Upper Tibetan Neolithic period (see p. 135, n. 29).[2] On the other end of the time continuum, several mantras written in red ochre have been produced in the Communist period.[3] In cognizance of this great diversity I have attempted to chronicle every image on the caves and rock faces of bKra shis Do, publishing many of them. The rock paintings of bKra shis Do examined in this publication were all produced using various shades of red ochre (iron oxide).

According to Bon tradition, bKra shis Do, known as gNam mTsho Do, was an important religious center in Zhang zhung times.[4] However, as the site has remained the focus of religious devotion until the present day monumental traces of the pre-Buddhist period or early historical period (when the area was still dominated by the Bon po) have been all but obliterated. If structural traces of early settlement do indeed survive they are to be found in the wall footings located near Gu ru sGrub chu Phug, rNam sras Phug, gNam mtsho'i Phug and Thang lha'i Phug, or in the crumbling facade walls around bKa' brgyud Phug che and bKa' brgyud Phug chung, all located on the south side of bKra shis Do chung. These aforementioned caves now lie abandoned, contemporary settlement all being located east of sMan lha Phug.

During the UTCE pictographs were found in a small cave that I had not visited earlier. This cave, located on the north side of bKra shis Do chen, is well hidden by dwarf willow growth and not even the local *sngags pa* seemed to have known of its existence. The four most important images, consisting of three anthropomorphs and one deer, are found on the right wall of this cave, which we have named Glang ma phug (Willow Cave)(P-1a).[5] The exfoliation of the pigment and wear characteristics of these compositions indicates that they are of significant age. Their identity as Bon or Buddhist cultural expressions is not determinable. The pictograph of a figure sitting cross-legged, right arm in the gesture of benediction is especially noteworthy (P-2a). The posture of

1. See Bellezza 1997a; 1997b; 1999b; 2000b; 2000c; 2000d; 2001.
2. As for the origin of rock painting in Inner Asia, it may lie in the cave of Khoist-Tsenker-Agui in the Mongolian Altai attributed to the end of the Paleolithic. Here various animals including Bactrian camels, horses, goats, bulls, birds and possibly mammoths were painted using ochre. See Derevyanko and Lü Zun-E 1992, p. 102.
3. See, for example, *Om' badzra satwa Hum'* in Thang lha'i Phug, *Om A Hum* and *Om ma ṇi padme Hum* in Zhi khro Phug.
4. For background historical information on bKra shis Do see Bellezza 1997a.
5. The ten centimeter long scale in this and other photographs is the one adopted by the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (based in Melbourne), which is designed for the computerized recalibration of images for true chroma, value and hue.

this figure identifies it either as a religious personage or deity. The other figure found in a lozenge formed by a single ochre line appears to be depicted in an ambulatory attitude (P-3a). It most resembles a *sgrub thob* (*mahasiddha*). The other anthropomorphous figure, legs spread apart, was painted in an almost orange ochre (P-1a).

In the bKra shis rTags brgyad Phug of bKra shis Do chung there are several *mchod rten* or *mchod rten*-like compositions pre-dating the 11th century CE that to my knowledge were not previously published (P-4a, P-5a, P-6a, P-7a). Unfortunately, all of these paintings are highly worn and not easily recognizable. With their broad bases, undeveloped stick-like spires and small squat *bum pa,* they depict early variants of the monument. Tracing the development of the *mchod rten* depicted in the bKra shis rTags brgyad Phug paintings is a difficult task. The most elaborate style specimens (a typical one is Bellezza 2000b, fig. 5; also shown in 2000d), such as those with thick pyramidal spires, elaborate bases, 'horns of the bird' crowns and prominent streamers, probably owe their inspiration to *stupa* monuments, which appeared in Gandhara, or subsequently in the Hindu Shahi kingdom.[6] The transmission of Gandharan culture northwards must have had a direct influence on the development of this type of *mchod rten* in Bru sha (Northern Areas, Pakistan) where they appear with trident-like *bya ru bya gri* finials,[7] in the manner of Bon iconographic conceptions of the *stupa* found across Upper Tibet. Clearly, however, the highly refined engravings of *stupas* with complex architectural elements depicted on boulders in Indus Kohistan, which reveal traces of ornamentation and architectural features that primarily derive from Gandhara, belong to a different line of cultural development.[8] This is typified not only by their more skilled execution, but by contrasting features such as the embellished niches, stepped drums, crescent and disc crowns, as well as associated inscriptions in Brahmi, Kharoshti and Sarada. This cultural variance is also underlined by religious affiliations: the refined Indus Kohistan *stupas* were executed by Buddhists, while there is strong evidence indicating that many of the bKra shis Do *mchod rten* were created by the Bon po (Bellezza 2000b).

In one bKra shis Do *mchod rten* (4a), a tiny bulbous structure (*bum pa*) sits on top of five graduated tiers, which rest upon a massively proportioned base. In another specimen (5a), we find an alternative type of *mchod rten* depicting a graduated five tier

6. For example, what may be a precursor of the types of early *mchod rten* depicted in the bKra shis Do pictographs is found on a stone relief object excavated from a Buddhist monastery in Tapa-i-Kafariha, Afghanistan, and dated to the 6th or 7th century CE (Seipel 1996: 283, 417, 418).
7. Three of these are found at the Chilas IV site, see Thewalt 1985, p. 792, figs. 16, 17; Jettmar 1985, pp. 767-770. Jettmar (1985) opines that these carvings may represent Bon sacred mountain symbols. Next to one of the Chilas IV *mchod rten* several archaic Tibetan letters were inscribed, probably indicating that it was made after Imperial period conquest of the region in the early 8th century.
8. For a discussion and photographs of the refined petroglyphic *stupas* of Indus Kohistan see Ebert 1994; Thewalt 1985. Ebert (1994) attempts to date (using indirect non-chronometric means) the highly ornamental *stupas* of Gandharan and Kashmiri inspiration found in Indus Kohistan to the 6th to 8th centuries CE.

base supporting a small *bum pa* surmounted by a truncated spire. Another distinctive feature of this specimen is that the lowest tier of the *mchod rten* is much larger than those on top of it and was solidly colored, while the rest of the structure was painted in outline form. In another example (6a), we can see that *dbu can* lettering was superimposed on the *mchod rten*. This type of rock art form, with its wide base and small bulbous *bum pa,* is found at two other places at bKra shis Do chung (Bellezza 1997a: 181; 2001: 210), as well as in Ru thog, in far western Tibet (see pp. 143, 144). The structure depicted terminates in a mast-like object.

mChod rten such as the types we have examined above share stylistic and chronological affinities with examples engraved on boulders on the opposite side of the Tibetan plateau in La dwags. Petroglyphic *mchod rten* with analogous elements such as squat *bum pa*, prominent bases and truncated spires, which were also rendered in a rather cursory fashion, have been recorded in western La dwags over the last 100 years.[9] These are often positioned in close association with archaic Tibetan inscriptions (Denwood 1980: 155-159; Francke 1903).[10] Archaisms characterizing these inscriptions such as the non-Buddhist onomastics, the reversed i, and 'my' before i and e, have parallels in Imperial period Tibetan documents from Central Asia (Tun-huang, Khotan etc.), and Tibetan pillar inscriptions dating to the 8th and 9th centuries (Denwood 1980: 161-163; Orofino 1990: 177, 178).[11] This linguistic and paleographic evidence indicates that the associated petroglyphic *mchod rten* date to the early Kashmir inspired phase of Buddhism (cf. Denwood 1980: 155; Orofino 1990, 177, 178), or at the very latest, to the *bstan pa phyi dar* (as suggested by the design of *mchod rten* painted in the temples of A lci) (Denwood 1980: 155).[12] Architectural similarities depicted in the La dwags petroglyphs and bKra shis Do pictographs must be taken as evidence that the latter were also made before 1000 or 1100 CE. However, the designs of these petroglyphic *stupas* contrast with Buddhist variants found on clay *tshwa tshwa*, which

9. See Francke 1902 (in particular, plates I, II, IV) ; 1903; 1905, plate 2, fig. 2; Denwood 1980, pp. 155-163; Orofino 1990; Francfort *et al.* 1992.
10. However, the authors in their examination of this material made no attempt to analyze wear, repatination and engraving characteristics of the respective elements in order to establish a relative chronology. The *mchod rten* and inscriptions published by Denwood (1980), on the basis of physical evidence appear chronologically closely related, but the photographs supplied are not high enough resolution to make a positive determination. The assumption that *mchod rten* and inscriptions in archaic Tibetan found in La dwags were sometimes created in conjunction with one another is corroborated by Orofino 1990.
11. Pictographic *mChod rten* found on another panel of the bKra shis rTags brgyad phug are also closely associated (in terms of physical proximity, type of ochre preparation used and wear characteristics) with archaic Tibetan inscriptions (Bellezza 2000b: 40-42). Unfortunately, these inscriptions are so worn as to be illegible.
12. Well formed carvings of *stupas* found on boulders in the vicinity of sBa lu mKhar, La dwags, have more modern features and probably date subsequent to the *bstan pa phyi dar*. See Francke 1905, plates VII, VIII.

are also thought to date before 1000 CE.[13] Moreover, the inclusion of the reverse *g.yung drung* in both La dwags and bKra shis Do *stupa* rock art indicates that the more crudely rendered variants of *mchod rten* found on the western fringe of the Tibetan plateau were also produced in a cultural atmosphere strongly influenced by Imperial period Bon beliefs. Likewise, *mchod rten* carved on rocks found in the sPi ti villages of Ta po and Lha ri have been assigned a Bon cultural orientation (Thakur 2000: 44).

In the bKra shis rTags brgyad phug the darker pigment of a *mani* mantra (the *ki gu* is visible in the photograph) contrasts with the much fainter depiction of the *mchod rten*-like pictograph above it (P-7a). This highly unusual form features a single-level base, half-circular mid-section placed on a pedestal and a broad three-pointed top, which probably represents the so-called *bya ru bya gri* of Bon. The probable Bon identity of the composition is corroborated by the counterclockwise *g.yung drung* to the left, painted in the same pigment. Below the *g.yung drung* there is a five-pointed star-like figure[14] that also displays the same wear and pigment characteristics of the main figure. While an Imperial period identity can possibly be assigned to this pictograph, in the absence of chronometric corroboration a periodization somewhat later, or possibly even earlier, cannot be ruled out.

Almost certainly the pictographs of *mchod rten* at bKra shis Do chung were produced by the indigenous population (now known as A pha Hor in the eastern Byang thang),[15] which seems to have been rather insulated from the contemporaneous Buddhist cultural world of the Central Asian silk road. This is indicated by the paucity of early Tibetan inscriptions, the absence of inscriptions in other languages, the frequent use of the counterclockwise *g.yung drung* (a regional emblem), and the generally not very adroit execution of the religious pictographs.[16]

In a cave associated with the sTag lung pa at bKra shis Do chen there are two Buddhist *mchod rten* in the *byang chub* style of illustration (P-8a, P-9a),[17] which

13. For a discussion and photographs of these early votive clay plaques see Pema Dorjee, pp. 110-114.
14. A five-pointed star is also found in a group of auspicious symbols associated with the Bon Eight Syllable mantra in the Brag Bying gur Phug (Bellezza 2001: plate 10.38).
15. One hundred years ago, Francke (1902: 398) was the first western scholar to note that similarly styled *mchod rten* with flags, 'tridents' [and counterclockwise *g.yung drung* in close proximity] are entirely different from modern variants of the monument.
16. Francke (1903: 362) opined that analogous rudimentary *mchod rten* in La dwags were probably of the kind erected by illiterate people. Francfort *et al.* 1992, (figure 28) classifies these types of *mchod rten* at A lci as 'primitive' or 'folkish' in style. Likewise Jettmar (1982: 29) attributes the roughly rendered *stupas* of Indus Kohistan to the possible existence of a folk religion that co-existed with Buddhism. These characterizations, as they can be applied to the pictographic *mchod rten* of bKra shis Do chung, allude to early Bon cultural traditions.
17. For red ochre inscriptions consisting of the names of sTag lung lamas found in this cave see Bellezza 1997a, p. 212.

postdate the *btsan pa phyi dar*. These monuments are identified by the round *bum pa*, long spires and *nyi zla* (sun and moon) finials that are depicted in the paintings. In contrast, there is a Bon motif in the sTag lung phug that probably predates the *mchod rten* (P-10a). Although marred by a lack of clarity, this unusual composition is important for providing us with an example of a graphic form most likely used by the Bon po prior to the 13th century. Within the ambit of each of the arms of the 25 centimeter tall counterclockwise *g.yung drung* is a single *dbu can* letter. Starting from the top left side and proceeding in a counterclockwise direction they seem to read: *ma, Om, A, ya / A*. The esoteric meaning of this inscription and why it was placed inside a *g.yung drung* is not entirely clear. However, we can assume that this was a magical diagram of some kind.[18]

In the 'Jam dbyangs Phug of bKra shis Do chung a *rdo rje* (*vajra*) (one of two found in the vicinity) was painted some centuries ago (P-11a). Such compositions could mark the location of *gter ma* (spiritual treasures), be used to eradicate noxious spirits or influences, or delineate ecclesiastical territory. In the vicinity of rDo zhun Phug, bKra shis Do chung, what appears to be an archaic *bum pa* or *mchod rten* was painted (P-12a). Despite having undergone much exfoliation of the pigment the five-tiered base, rounded mid-section, and narrow neck surmounted by a pyramidal structure, are still partially visible in this composition. In the Pad sdong Phug of bKra shis Do chung a *nor bu me 'bar* design was painted exhibiting nine distinctive tongues of fire (P-13a).[19] The wear and exfoliation exhibited by the painting demonstrates that it is of considerable age. Such a style composition was almost certainly made by the pre-13th century Bon po, whose art is very well represented at bKra shis Do. One of their inscriptions is found in the dBu ma Phug of bKra shis Do chung, which reads: A Phaṯ (it may have been preceded by the syllable Om or swo) (P-14a). A counterclockwise *g.yung drung* probably rendered in the same hand is found above the inscription, and below it an elaborate double *sna ro* of the Bon po Om syllable is visible. Such inscriptions and *g.yung drung* were employed to exorcise spiritual disturbances and harmful influences. Territorial rivalries with the Buddhists may well be reflected in these kinds of depictions.

(L-242) Name: Brag khung mDzes po (Handsome Cave). Location: north of the confluence of the gNyen Do and 'Bog rivers, A zur township, Nyi ma county. There are minor structural remains near this ancient meditation cave, which has three mouths. On the wall opposite the main entrance four counterclockwise *g.yung drung* were painted, three in a brownish red ochre and one in yellow ochre. More significant is a nearby composition depicting an archaic *mchod rten* in white, red and yellow pigments (P-1b). The proximate counterclockwise *g.yung drung* made in the same red ochre indicates that this composition was painted by the Bon po. Distinctive elements in this painting include its not well defined *bum pa*, very small spire, long streamers and the *bya ru bya gri*-like *tog* (finale). The style of this pictograph shows that it was made prior to the

18. Another unusual diagram that seems to have been created by the ancient Bon po is found in the nearby Klu khang grotto. See Bellezza 2000b, p. 43.
19. This image is also published in Bellezza 2000d.

13th century, and based on comparative evidence from other rock art sites, an Imperial period date may be indicated. Polychrome pictographs are uncommon in Upper Tibet.[20]

(L-250) Name: Ri rgyal (Monarch Mountain). Location: Shen chen township, sGer rtse county.

This large petroglyphic site is mainly located at the east foot of Ri rgyal mountain in a large field of quartzitic sandstone boulders. Several hundred petroglyphs are found on more than 120 boulders spread over an area greater than one square kilometer.[21] With the help of three associates I have tried to document all of the rock art found at Ri rgyal, but as it is distributed over a relatively large area containing thousands of boulders, it is inevitable that an unknown percentage were missed. A small number of petroglyphs are also found on the flat-topped summit of Ri rgyal. The rock carvings of Ri rgyal belong exclusively to a pre-Buddhist hunting society, which used the horse as a mount and was concerned with the slaughter of wild yaks, and to a much lesser degree, other ungulates.

The pre-Buddhist identity of Ri rgyal is borne out by the following evidence: *(1)* the archaic style of compositions; *(2)* the heavy erosion and strong repatination of the petroglyphs; 3) the subject matter, which is almost entirely limited to hunting and the depiction of wild animals; and 4) the absence of inscriptions and lamaist compositions. The presence of the horse in nearly all the hunting compositions, in conjunction with the narrow technical and stylistic spectrum of the site, demonstrates that probably all of the Ri rgyal rock art originated in the period after the domestication of the horse, circa 1000 BCE.[22] On the other hand, the conspicuous absence of historical era compositions

20. For another polychrome depiction of a *mchod rten*-like object see Bellezza 1997a, p. 262.
21. Pre-Buddhist archaeological monuments found in the vicinity are examined on pp. 89, 94. Petroglyphic sites in Central Asia are often interpreted as having been open-air sanctuaries (Francfort 1998: 306, 311; Okladnikov 1990: 89). The presence of ancient cemeteries at Ri rgyal and at the Rwa 'brog 'Phrang site (see Bellezza 2001: 154, 155) indicates that an analogous conception of geography was also in operation at petroglyphic sites in Upper Tibet.
22. This hypothetical date is based on the appearance of horse-riding nomads in regions adjacent to Tibet. At present there is no archaeological evidence indicating when the horse was domesticated in Upper Tibet. However, it is highly unlikely, due to geographical and cultural affinities, that this technological innovation documented for Mongolia and other steppe regions in the Second and First Millennia BCE could have bypassed Tibet. This seems all the more true when we consider the great mobility that the horse offered Iron Age steppe nomads. It would appear that at the end of the 3rd Millennium BCE, the domestic horse spread from the steppes near the Caspian sea east into Mongolia and China with the Afanasievo culture (Masson 1992b: 347). Nevertheless, it was not until the Early Iron Age (middle First Millennium BCE), that the Eurasian steppe belt experienced the firm establishment of nomadic pastoralism with its extensive use of the horse and saddle for riding (Askarov *et al.* 1992: 463). In Central Asia, in the period from 700 BCE to 300 BCE, the introduction of bridles and horse bits made of metal

and technical innovations indicates that the tradition of making petroglyphs at Ri rgyal was probably abandoned before 700 CE. This periodization shows that the Ri rgyal petroglyphs were produced by members of the Zhang zhung-Mon culture.

In sites I have surveyed spanning the early historical period (pre-1000 CE) in Ru thog county and at gNam mTsho, inscriptions and monuments such as *mchod rten* are fairly well represented (see Bellezza 2000b; 2001; as well as the present monograph). Another indication of the antiquity of the Ri rgyal site is that the petroglyphs are rendered in the Byang thang variant of the Eurasian animal style, which prevailed across the steppes of Inner Asia in the First Millennium BCE, particularly the vibrant depiction of hunters on horseback in pursuit of game. The pre-Buddhist attribution of Ri rgyal is also supported by the narrow repertoire of archaic symbolic motifs, which include a few *g.yung drung*, crescents, sunbursts, 'trees' and several unidentified figures.

Another indication of the age of the Ri rgyal site lies in the physical condition of the petroglyphs. These carvings were made by removing areas from the blue-black layer of desert varnish (oxalate skin) that coated the boulders. Since their creation, carved surfaces have undergone a high degree of repatination and erosion, indicative of many centuries of exposure to the elements. The erosional and repatination characteristics of the original petroglyphs contrasts markedly with several specimens that were produced much more recently, which exhibit far less advanced signs of aging. Due to the geo-chemical and geo-structural processes at work many of the petroglyphs of Ri rgyal have become severely degraded. However, the site does not appear to have been modified or vandalized due to its isolation from areas of settlement, and its marginal place in Buddhist sacred geographic traditions.

The limited subject matter of Ri rgyal is reflective of a less diversified economy and narrower cultural purview than that which existed in the historical period. Petroglyphic themes, with only a few exceptions, are preoccupied with the depiction of hunters on horseback chasing ungulates or the isolated depiction of these animals. This suggests that the rock art tradition at Ri rgyal was a male gender-based activity. Most boulders depict one hunting scene, consisting of one or two mounted archers and their prey, typically numbering one to three animals, or a like number of animals on their own. There are, however, several more complex compositions with up to 36 figures. A large percentage of boulders support only one petroglyphic composition of one to three figures, while a significant minority are adorned with more than one composition. Some depictions of animals with their long tails may represent carnivores, and in certain hunting scenes hounds may be depicted. Non-hunting, non-ungulate compositions documented at Ri rgyal are isolated to three birds, four or five of unmounted anthropomorphs and a few symbolic representations.

allowed for horseback riding over long distances, leading to significantly stronger cultural and economic contacts between various regions of the steppes (Ishjmats 1994: 152). In the First Millennium BCE, nomads of Mongolia and Central Asia in particular reared the Przhevalski horse, a small, stocky, high endurance breed (*ibid*: 151).

We can infer from hunting scenes that the bovidae depicted are the wild variant of the yak and not the domesticated form of the animal. The hunting of wild yaks (*'brong*) on horseback was a popular activity at Ri rgyal, shown with many minor variations in composition.[23] The bushy tails, prominent hair fringes on the belly, humped withers and short curved horns are characteristic of wild yak depictions at Ri rgyal, as they are at other rock art sites in Upper Tibet. In one composition found on the summit of Ri rgyal what may be a hound is shown in the scene along with a lone *'brong* and mounted archer (P-1c). In another composition a mounted archer is taking aim at a huge *'brong* facing him head on (P-4c). In two other compositions the wild yaks are shown with projectiles in their backs as the hunters (seemingly one who is on foot) move in for the final kill (P-2c, P-3c). The presence of large herds of wild ungulates would explain why the drive form of hunting developed in Upper Tibet, as documented in many hundreds of rock art compositions in the region.[24] Also very common at Ri rgyal are the depiction of solitary *'brong* (P-5c, P-6c), and in certain examples these animals are rendered along with sunbursts and crescents (P-7c, P-8c). These two examples of the depiction of heavenly bodies with ungulates, as well as other examples in Upper Tibet, probably had a protective, procreative and / or cosmological function.[25]

The physical condition and style of ancient petroglyphs of *'brong* sharply contrast with the very few more recent compositions found at Ri rgyal (only three were observed). A much more recently carved yak is bereft of the fluidity and vitality of the early specimens (P-9c). Although far less common than the smaller hunting scenes, there are also examples of hunts with a number of mounted archers, multiple *'brong* and possibly other animals (P-10c). Hunting of animals on foot is very uncommon at Ri rgyal. One such composition portrays an archer stalking a *'brong* (11c). The anthropomorphous figure appears to wear a tall headdress or mask of some kind.

The quarry of the hunters is not always recognizable and includes other type of ungulates. A mounted figure in pursuit of one or two unidentified animals (not shown) holds what may be a bow (P-12c). His right arm is extended behind his body as if drawing a bow or grasping at the reins of his mount. The long tail and erect ears of his horse are clearly rendered. In another composition a rider seems to be holding the reins of his horse with one arm and counterbalancing with the other arm (P-13c). The sun and moon rise above a rider (same as in P-7c) who does not appear to be directly

23. It is generally accepted that in Iron Age Central Asia the appearance of hunters on horseback with bows and arrows signals a change in the contents of petroglyphs from earlier depictions of hunters on foot and with chariots (cf. Francfort 1998: 304). At Ri rgyal no such cultural antecedents are found.
24. Likewise, it is believed that the drive technique of hunting developed in Central Asia because of the existence of herds of ungulates adapted to the grasslands (Masson 1992a: 39).
25. Similarly, Siberian ethnographic and petroglyphic materials show that the link between elk-maral images and the sun is one of the most ancient cosmological elements in the cultures of Siberia (Anisimov 1963: 162, 163).

engaged in hunting. The sun and moon, as in other parts of the world, have had cosmological and religious significance for the dwellers of Upper Tibet for untold millennia, and their religious symbolism also extends to Bon and Buddhism. Also on this boulder another animal was chiseled in outline form. In another depiction an animal most resembling an antelope with its long straight horns strikes a different appearance from the *'brong* beside it (P-14c). On another boulder an animal with a long tail could possibly represent a carnivore (P-15c). Note the far less repatinated scratched areas on this petroglyph.

What may be a *rkyang* or horse with its bristly mane and upright ears occupies a lone position on another boulder (P-16c). On one of the more elaborately carved boulders a horned raptor, bird in profile, 'tree', crescent, yaks, and several mounted figures and other markings form one of the most diverse depictions at Ri rgyal (P-17c). The beautiful horned raptor with its partially folded wings and wide tail is especially noteworthy (P-18c). This composition appears to be a pre-Buddhist form of the well known *khyung* eagle deity and is shown in its most common frontal attitude. It provides antecedent iconographic justification for the characteristic horned attribute of the historical era *khyung*. In Bon tradition, the *khyung* is closely associated with the pre-Buddhist Zhang zhung kingdom. Its long and prominent place in Tibetan culture is reflected in its diverse functions as a protective spirit, clan progenitor and tutelary deity.[26]

There are only a few non-hunting compositions depicting anthropomorphs at Ri rgyal, circumscribing what can be learned about pre-Buddhist culture from the site. What may be dancing figures, legs raised and arms bent, are found on two different boulders (P-19c, P-20c). The lower figure in the pair may be holding something in its outstretched arm. Only about seven *g.yung drung* (shown oriented in both directions) grace the Ri rgyal site.[27] One pair has short hooks for arms, an archaic depiction (P-21c), while other *g.yung drung* are shown with equal length arms and cross sections.[28] In addition to being depicted with animals there are a few examples of crescents and sunbursts found in isolation on boulders (P-22c, P-23c). On the horizontal face of one boulder there is a 'tree' and circular designs, in addition to animals (P-24c). About an equal number of figures on the same boulder are not shown in this photograph.

26. See Bellezza 1997a, pp. 80-83. Likewise, in the shamanistic mythology of the ancient Mongols, the eagle was a totem and protective cultural hero (Okladnikov 1990: 88, 89).
27. In the earliest representations of *g.yung drung* in Upper Tibet rock art they appear to be indiscriminately oriented in both directions.
28. The *g.yung drung* (swastika) is emblematic of the Bon religion in both its modern and unsystematized early forms, and is very well represented in the rock art of Upper Tibet. It is most notably a cosmogonic and cosmological symbol. The swastika, as an important symbol, is also found in many other ancient Eurasian cultures but traceable archaeological connections with Tibet are still beyond our scope. Autochthonous origins aside, the swastika could have possibly entered Tibet with either the Indus River civilization or with the steppe dwelling Andronovo culture; in both of which the design is known from painted pottery finds.

Unidentified compositions at Ri rgyal are intrinsically among the most intriguing, and include two quite elaborate circular figures (P-25, P-26) and a parasol-like figure with an adjacent crescent (P-27). These compositions could either be symbolic or iconic in nature, but at this stage in the inquiry there are no cultural benchmarks by which they can be assessed.

(L-243) Name: sPungs ri (Heap Mountain). Location: sKabs ren, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

sPungs ri, a spur of a much larger ridge, is conspicuously situated on the left side of the lower sKabs ren valley (elevation 4420 meters). About 90 percent of the approximately 300 depictions of ungulates and other figures form a compact area roughly measuring 18 meters vertical by a linear distance of 45 meters on the west side of the formation. The sPungs ri petroglyphic site is of considerable antiquity, as indicated by the style of the compositions, the fairly narrow range of subject matter, and the advanced repatination and erosion of the compositions. sPungs ri (made of dark red sandstone) appears to straddle both the pre-Buddhist (Zhang zhung-Mon culture) and early Buddhist (Imperial) periods. There is no evidence of figurative art created in the last 1000 years, although the site has seen the carving of mantras until relatively recently. There is no clear indication when the first petroglyphs were manufactured at sKabs ren, but on the basis of style and content an early date is suggested. Some of the petroglyphs may in fact date to the earliest period of rock art in the region, which could be contemporaneous with the close of the Neolithic.[29]

The depth of time reflected in the site, combined with the total number of compositions, portrays the tradition of rock art carving as an activity only very infrequently indulged in by the native hunters and pastoralists.[30] This would seem to suggest that this activity had either very limited appeal for local inhabitants or that it was the provenance of a select few individuals operating under special conditions. The contemporary beliefs of residents do very little to elucidate by whom and why this rock art was made. In fact, there is very little interest evinced in them.[31] According to regional sources, the rock art of Ru thog, such as that found at sKabs ren sPungs ri, is variously attributed to the following factors:

29. Unfortunately, very scanty archaeological data does not permit us to know with any precision when the New Stone Age gave way to the Metal Age in Upper Tibet, but as in adjoining high montane environments, it probably continued well into the Second Millennium BCE. Neolithic cultures in Swat (persisted to 1500 BCE), and particularly in Kashmir (persisted until 1700 BCE), exhibit a retardation in the transition to food production, and certain anachronistic traditions (such as pit dwellings) survived until the emergence of urban civilization in the Indus valley (Sharif and Thapar: 151). A factor that may have forestalled the transition to a production-based economy in Upper Tibet was the plentiful supply of big game.
30. The nearby Rwa 'brog 'Phrang site also affords evidence of rock carving as an activity with very limited currency (Bellezza 2001: 212).
31. The same disinterest is shown by local residents in La dwags towards the petroglyphs of A lci (Denwood 1980: 155).

(1) the creation of the ancient inhabitants of the region;
(2) magically self-formed without human intervention (*rang byon*);
(3) handiwork of the indigenous *lha 'dre* spirits.

Horsemen are conspicuously few in number with only three depictions having been identified, two of them created using a primitive pecking technique and one made by an engraving technique. None of the mounted figures exhibits the highest degree of repatination, which microenviromental and geochemical factors notwithstanding, suggests that they are not of the maximum age found at the site. In addition to the horsemen, anthropomorphous figures include: a standing figure near a mounted archer, a pair of standing archers, and two or three lone archers. Unlike Ri rgyal there are very few hunting scenes at sKabs ren; most of the rich variety of ungulates depicted are done so in isolation. Only two aviform compositions were documented and little in the way of symbolism. Symbolic motifs are limited to a circle on two different panels and one sunburst, in addition to a lone counterclockwise *g.yung drung* on the east side of the formation. Without obvious economic function, the isolated depiction of ungulates raises questions as to the purpose of this cultural expression, but answers are not clearly forthcoming. Early historical era compositions may be limited to four *mchod rten*-like structures, the *g.yung drung* noted above and one *mani* mantra.

What appears to be a mounted figure was created with just several ambiguous lines (P-1d). More clearly represented is a mounted archer in close proximity to a standing figure (P-2d). The form of the figures and engraving characteristics demonstrates that these two figures form an integral composition. The technique of manufacture using metal tools and the less than maximum repatination of the petroglyph is evidence strongly suggesting that this composition should be attributed to a later phase of sKabs ren rock art. On the other hand, a standing archer exhibiting considerable variation in the style of manufacture and maximum repatination would seem to be considerably older (P-3d). In another composition several animals are in close proximity to an archer, who, with bow raised, strikes a triumphant pose (P-4d).

The stylistic and technical repertoire used to create yaks is very broad and probably indicates considerable chronological diversity (P-5d, P-6d, P-7d, P-8d). The solitary depiction of what ostensibly are wild variants of the animal (as well as other non-hunting compositions featuring animals) is best interpreted using a cultural historical perspective.[32] The yak in particular has had numerous mundane and supra-mundane roles in Upper Tibet society.

Of several deer depicted (identified by their branched horns) at sKabs ren, two of them display S-shaped or a scroll-like design in their bodies, which is also a characteristic design feature of ungulates found at other sites in Ru thog. On the basis of its more elaborated style and aging characteristics, the deer in close association with a long-tailed, carnivore-like animal (P-10d), does not seem as old as the other depiction (P-9d). The use of S-shaped designs to ornament and circumscribe the bodies of ungulates (but seldom yaks) is a regular feature in petroglyphs of far western Tibet. This style of ornamentation is similar in form to the volutes found in petroglyphs and certain artifacts associated with various regions of Central Asia. This specific design feature seems to ally the two regions more closely together than general thematic and stylistic commonalties alone would prepare us to consider.

32. For a review of the economic, social and religious functions of animals in Upper Tibet see Bellezza 2000b; 2000c; 2001, pp. 192-198.

Let us examine some of the comparative archaeological data in order to assess the range and extent that steppe nomadic culture might have impinged upon Upper Tibet. Double volutes, one each on the front and rear quarters of ungulates can be traced to the Arzhan stele (generally dated to the 9th or 8th century BCE), to a copper alloy mirror with an ibex design found at Ajmyrlyg in Tuva and attributed to the 6th to 3rd centuries BCE, and to *kurgan* motifs at Tuekta I and Bashadar II (6th-5th century BCE), among other examples (Francfort *et al.* 1992: 152-154, figs. 15-20; Rudenko 1970: 270, 271). Petroglyphs depicting a cervid, horse and felines decorated with two volutes, are found at the Ust'-Tuba site in southern Siberia.[33] Double volute motifs are also found on cervids carved on Mongolian deer stones (Novgorodova 1980: 131; Askarov *et al.* 1992: 469), and S-shaped designs ornament the bodies of three illustrated ungulate petroglyphs of Mongolia (Okladnikov 1981a: 226, 227), as well as a similar motif represented in cervid petroglyphs of the Yinshan mountains of Inner Mongolia (Francfort *et al.* 1992: 153, 154).

These petroglyphs are attributed to the Scytho-Siberian animal style, a distinctive type of art that appeared in the Steppes circa 1000 BCE (Francfort 1998: 302, 304; Sher 1994: II, III, XVII-XXI), which is associated with various types of mediums, most notably bronze.

In the face of the available evidence, differences in the style and execution of the double volute motif of Central Asia and the S-shaped motif of western Tibet do not permit us to fix an exact correlation in which the diffusion of the design from one geographic region to the other can be postulated with any degree of certainty. A study conducted of several ungulate petroglyphs with the S-shaped motif found in La dwags and Zangs dkar seemed to reach a similar conclusion, stating that it is difficult to find exact parallels between the petroglyphs of these regions and those of Mongolia, Kazakhstan and south Siberia (Francfort *et al.* 1992: 181). In Ru thog county, the multiplicity of sites (no less than nine containing at least 50 examples) in which the S-shaped motif is found exhibit significant stylistic variations in the design coupled with considerable chronological diversity.[34] Although it has been hypothesized that the motif was derived from Andronovo and Scytho-Siberian cultures as represented by the inverted volutes designs of First Millennium BCE Central Asian Funerary sites (*ibid.* 152, 153), I believe that its sheer distribution and diversity in far Western Tibet argues in favor of a long process of indigenous development not limited to a foreign vector of transmission

33. Francfort and Sher 1995, pp. 52-54, diagrams 58, 62, plates 28, 29; Sher 1994, pp. II, III; Francfort *et al.* 1992, fig. 14; Sher and Garyaeva 1996, pp. 115, 116, fig. 13.1.
34. See Suolang Wangdui 1994; Bellezza 2001; and other sites treated in this work.

from the First Millennium BCE. This, however, is not to say that Scytho-Siberian steppic influences were not felt in far western Tibet, for as we have seen, the slab grave and pillar typologies of the region certainly point in that direction. If indeed the S-shaped petroglyphic motif originated in the eastern steppes, its apparent confinement to sPi ti, La dwags, Zans dkar and Ru thog, areas on the Tibetan plateau closest to Indus Kohistan, a conduit of Saka cultural interpenetration, must be seen as supporting evidence.

As I have consistently maintained due to mounting evidence, the rock art of Upper Tibet constitutes a distinctive tradition of Eurasian animal art. It certainly does not owe its existence to Scytho-Siberian rock art and roving bands of nomads, but rather to a long process of endogenous development. While the rock art of Upper Tibet was most probably enriched by contacts with steppe cultures in the First and Second Millennia BCE, it is primarily the product and expression of autochthonous Tibetan culture. Most fundamentally, rock art is a graphic index of prehistoric Tibetan culture, which long foreshadowed the much better known period of Buddhist art. If there is one subject matter emblematic of the Tibetaness of native rock art it is the yak, depicted in myriad styles and cultural associations in dozens of sites throughout Upper Tibet. Conversely, 'Okunevo' type mascoids,[35] prolific Bactrian camels, hand prints, chariots, and cervids with projecting muzzles and hyperbolic wave-like horns horizontally overarching the backs of the animals (most common Scytho-Siberian depiction), which are emblematic of steppic rock art, are not articulated in Upper Tibet.[36]

Nonetheless, the rock art of Upper Tibet does supply us with tantalizing but hard to qualify evidence of prehistoric cultural contacts with her northern neighbors. These include general structural similarities in style and content as pertains to hunting themes and ungulates, and their strident depiction. More specifically, there are two other types of compositions in far western Tibet indicative of these long lost Inner Asian cultural bridges that warrant special mention. The first of these concerns an affronted pair of squatting figures with bulbous objects between their legs found at the Ra 'brog 'Phrang site (Bellezza 2001: 220), the identity and age of which are not clear save that it belongs to the pre-Buddhist phase of rock art. Analogous figures are well represented in Central Asia, particularly in Mongolia, albeit apparently not in pairs. One such example found at the Ust'-Tuba III site has been interpreted as a birth-giving figure and dated (using indirect methods) to the Bronze Age (Francfort 1998: 307, fig. 17.2). In Mongolia these types of figures, with and without pendulous breasts, have been likened to cosmogonic ancestress figures, and are also thought to date to the Eneolithic and Bronze Age (Novgorodova 1984: 44, 49). Secondly, there are striped and spotted feline compositions in which close stylistic correspondences exist, suggesting some level of common cultural ground between the western Tibetan plateau and Mongolia.[37] These are characterized by gaping jaws, pointed ears, prominent eyes, tails curled over the body and, in some cases, the felines are chasing ungulates.

35. The early cultural orientation of Indus Kohistan, on the basis of petroglyphic evidence, however, is very different. Fairly clear physical correspondences between mascoids and certain anthropomorphic figures in Indus Kohistan, south Siberia and Ningxia have been used to assign these regions to the same circle of Bronze Age Okunevo culture. See Francfort 1991.

36. For my comparative analysis I have relied on the following studies pertaining to the rock art of Mongolia, Greater Turkestan, the Altai and south Siberia: Francfort 1998; Sher 1994; Francfort and Sher 1995; Francfort *et al.* 1993; Francfort *et al.* 1992; Sher and Garyaeva 1996; Okladnikov 1982; 1981a; 1981b; 1980a; 1980b; 1979; Novgorodova 1984; 1980; Khudiakov 1987; Devlet 1998; 1976; Chen Zhao Fu and Anati 1987; Volkov 1995; Kubarev and Matochkin 1992; Hoppál 1992.

At sKabs ren there are several compositions featuring ungulates with spiraling horns (P-11d, P-12d).[38] These appear to represent caprids and on the basis of horn design they most resemble the argali (*gnyan*), which are still found in the region, albeit in dwindling numbers. The manner in which the legs are spread apart imparts the impression that they are shown running. Other depictions of ungulates also feature S-shaped body ornamentation. The long zigzag horns of two specimens are suggestive of the Tibetan antelope (*gtsod*) (P-13d). Two graceful *rkyang*-like figures may represent the very earliest tier of rock art at sKabs ren (P-14d). Their physical condition and simple but adroit lines exude significant antiquity. The identity of another pair of highly repatinated animal figures is not clear but there is a bird-like quality to them (P-15d). The presence of only one pair of legs and what appears to be the splayed and segmented rear of the animals is reminiscent of birds. In another composition there is one of the two figures that can be positively identified as birds or bird-like creatures at sKabs ren (P-16d). Their outstretched wings and triangular tails probably identify them as raptors.

The rudimentary *mchod rten*-like compositions found at sKabs ren are not as heavily repatinated as some of the zoomorphic compositions we have examined which, possible microenvironmental factors aside, suggests that they are of more recent manufacture (P-17d, P-18d). Nevertheless, their style recalls an early example of the monument that could well have originated with the Bon po. They can be closely compared with the bKra shis Do *mchod rten* we examined above (in particular P-4a and P-6a), situated on the opposite end of the Byang thang. Their attribution to the Imperial period is warranted, and perhaps even to the Zhang zhung-Mon milieu. If more modern symbolism is applicable, the five tiers of specimen P-17d represent the five elements. The depiction of similar structures was subsequently covered by an inscribed *mani* mantra (P-19d). From this action it is evident that the carver had little regard for the earlier composition. There are quite a number of other examples of older animal compositions being obliterated

37. For felines of Ru thog see Suolang Wangdui 1994, nos. 11, 17 ,38; Bellezza 2001, p. 215, 219, plates 61, 62, 80; 2000d. For felines of La dwags see Francke 1907, p.148, fig. 2; Francfort *et al.* 1992, p. 153, 154, figs. 24, 25. For felines of Mongolia see Novgorodova 1984, p. 99, plate 37; 1980, p. 134. These types of feline petroglyphs are also found in sPi ti (Bellezza 1997a: 424).

38. Petroglyphs of ungulates with spiraling horns are also found in Mongolia (Novgorodova 1980: fig. 142), but these tend to be much larger and more elaborate than the figures under review.

by zealous mantra carvers to create palimpsests (These are also readily found at the Ri mo gdong and Ra 'brog 'phrang sites in Ru thog county). In one example the letter A and an inscription reading "*UHu lags bla ma rdo rje 'dzan* (= *'dzin*) *chen po bkra shis*" partially obscure a panel of animals (P-20d). During his survey of sKabs ren sPungs ri the present author could only locate one potentially archaic inscription. This depicts the *mani* mantra (P-21d).

(L-244) Name: Gong ra. Location: Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

This site is situated on an outcrop overlooking the south side of Ra spang mTsho (elevation 4400 meters). In total, there are upwards of one hundred figures found at Gong ra but many are beyond recognition. Most of the petroglyphs found here are not as well executed as those at sPungs ri, nor are they as deeply carved into the rock faces (and thus they are much prone to the effects of erosion). Moreover, none of the compositions at Gong ra was made using the archaic pecking technique. The site is also weak in subject content; there do not seem to be any symbolic motifs or anthropomorphs depicted. The stiff portrayal of most animals and the crude technique of manufacture indicates that at least a portion of the compositions were produced in a decadent phase, which probably coincided with the early historical period during the first diffusion of Buddhism.

A wild yak dated by the accompanying inscription to the historical period was executed in the same fashion and displays identical wear characteristics (P-1e).[39] The inscription labels the rather roughly carved figure a yak (*g.yag*), which exhibits the typical anatomical features of the species. Another yak, instead of being shown in outline, has been dexterously silhouetted by the complete removal of the rock surface from the figure (P-2e). Among the most interesting and best preserved compositions at Gong ra depict raptors, two of which clearly appear to be horned (P-3e, P-4e, P-5e). Portrayed with outstretched wings, these figures do not display the fluidity of execution we have seen in their counterparts from sKabs ren and Ri rgyal. The depiction of raptors' wings, spread presumably in flight, was the most common way of rendering this group of birds in Upper Tibet.[40]

(L-208) Name sGog ra. Location: sGog ra, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

Petroglyphs are found on at least 40 boulders spread across an approximately one kilometer length of the narrow sGog ra valley (elevation 4560-4670 meters). Most of the petroglyphs found at this site date to the pre-Buddhist (Zhang zhung-Mon cultural) period and are concerned with hunting and animals. However, there are also non-hunting compositions providing us with valuable material on early culture in the region. sGog ra is another of the Ru thog rock art sites that probably began during the earliest phase of rock carving in Upper Tibet. There are also a few compositions which appear to date to the early Buddhist occupation but there are no inscriptions at sGog ra. The site appears to have been disused as a rock carving ground for 1000 years or more. On average the approximately 40 boulders of sGog ra support a larger number of figures than do the boulders of Ri rgyal, it not being unusual to find six to 12 elements per stone. Ungulates and mounted archers dominate at sGog ra, and by far the most common animal represented is the wild yak.

On one boulder we find the two main methods of depicting *'brong*: in outline form (created by removing the rock surface from the profile of the animal) and silhouetted (created by removing the rock surface from the entire depiction of the animal) (P-1f). In what seems to be a hunting scene, three horsemen move in close proximity to three *'brong* and two nondescript animals, which could possibly be the horsemen's hounds (P-2f). The long tail curling over the back of the one animal would seem to identify it as a carnivore. At the bottom of the panel there is an S-shaped motif; however, nowhere at sGog ra do we find ungulates ornamented with this design. On the upper left side of the panel there are other petroglyphs that seem to date to the historical period, the decadent stage in the rock carving tradition of the region. The differences in style, technique, quality of manufacture, and wear qualities are highly conspicuous. On another boulder we find three of four *'brong* and several other zoomorphs that probably represent the earliest stage of rock carving at sGog ra (P-3f). Near the top of the boulder there is a yak that is less adeptly carved than the other figures and far less repatinated representing a subsequent addition to the rock face.

On another stone there are two *'brong*, and five or six other animals (P-4f). A smaller animal reminiscent of a horse or *rkyang* found below the lower *'brong* appears to have something on its back. On the right edge of the boulder there is a standing archer and at the bottom edge there appears to be another anthropomorphous figure. In a complex hunting scene of much vitality four mounted archers aim in the direction of at least half a dozen *'brong* (P-5f). The horsemen outflanking their quarry provide an excellent example of the drive technique of hunting used in ancient Tibet. There are several other animal figures on this boulder, as well as a square object. Three or four elongated figures of animals grace another boulder (P-6f). The large central figure appears to have the branched antlers of a deer and may have been depicted with a male sexual organ.

There are only a few non-hunting anthropomorphic compositions at sGog ra. One of these shows a pair of figures (one of which seems to be ithyphallic), arms and legs spread (P-7f). The anatomical differences in the respective figures could represent a male-female dichotomy. In another composition two figures stand close together as if dancing or fighting (P-8f). On another boulder one or two anthropomorphous figures share the rock face with a square object divided into four parts (P-9f). Perhaps such geometric motifs represent tents or corrals, but there is no means at our disposal to verify this. The square upper figure appears to hold a flag-like object aloft. Also on this boulder a *rdo rje*-like object was carved. On another rock there is an anthropomorphous

39. In the petroglyphs of A lci there is a composition featuring a clockwise *g.yung drung*, several animals and an anthropomorphous figure which apparently is wielding a bow in conjunction with short inscriptions (Denwood 1980: 157). Similarly, these ostensibly historical era figures were stiffly executed and lack the gracefulness and vigor of pre-Buddhist representational rock art.

40. See other works on rock art by the author. Petroglyphs depicting soaring falcons, eagles and vultures with their wings spread, were also a salient feature of the Scytho-Siberian tribes of the steppes (Okladnikov 1990: 88, 89).

figure standing next to an animal (P-10f). What might be a sword is bound at the waist of the human figure. The *'brog pa* of Upper Tibet still carry swords in this manner. The more realistic style of this composition and its physical characteristics indicates that it dates to a later period of petroglyph manufacture at sGog ra.

On one boulder a raptor-like figure and a clockwise *g.yung drung* (the only one documented at the site) were carved (P-11f). On another stone an animal and two hourglass-like figures resembling *rdo rje* or *ḍam ma ru* (hourglass-shaped hand drum) were cut into the rock (P-12f). The not very highly advanced repatination of the figures indicates that they were produced subsequent to the early period petroglyphs of sGog ra.

One of the most intriguing assemblages of figures at sGog ra features a figure wielding a weapon-like instrument, a horseman, three *rdo rje* in two different styles (identified by their characteristic shape and pronged features) and two circles, all of which are less worn and repatinated than the two gourd-shaped objects that share the same rock face (P-13f). The physical properties of the compositions indicate that the gourd-shaped objects considerably predate the remainder of the motifs (P-14f). While the *rdo rje* (ritual thunderbolt) do not belong to the oldest figures on the rock surface, they exhibit significant wear that could only have been accumulated over centuries of exposure. The *rdo rje* is singly the most important symbol in the Vajrayana Buddhism of Tibet, and its depiction next to the unidentified objects may indicate that they too were seminal symbols, albeit of an earlier epoch. These mysterious motifs bring to mind generative eggs, masks and mandalas, but as yet there are no clues to the identity of these globular objects and the various internal elements they contain. However, the complexity and careful rendering of the compositions speak of their symbolic importance, as does the juxtaposition of the *rdo rje*. Similar petroglyphs are found on two other boulders at sGog ra (P-15f, P-16f). They too are bi-circular and contain a number of different internal elements. The variable wear and desert varnish characteristics of these two specimens may be evidence to show that they were produced at significantly different time intervals. Two examples of a similar gourd-shaped motif are found at the Ri mo gdong site, Ri gsum township, Ru thog county (P-17f).[41] Unfortunately, the Ri mo gdong specimens are highly worn, precluding a detailed inspection of their internal elements.

(L-245) Name: Brag gdong. Location: north side of Glog phug mTsho, Ra spang township, Ru thog county.

On the remote north shore of Glog phug mTsho rugged formations that plunge into the lake are called Brag gdong (elevation 4370 meters). Petroglyphs are found on two of these lakeside escarpments and date from the late pre-Buddhist (Zhang zhung-Mon) period and the adjacent early Buddhist (Imperial) period. West of the sMig pa mKhar ru archaeological monument (see p. 37) there is a petroglyphic site I refer to as Brag gdong West. One panel facing west found at this site has around 50 figures, including a counterclockwise *g.yung drung* in the midst of many animals, yaks and what may be

41. For coverage of this important site see Suolang Wangdui 1994, pp. 65-71.

several hunters on horseback (P-16g). On the upper end of the rock face an unfinished carving of a *mani* mantra has obscured several petroglyphs. The uniform wear and style traits of the panel suggest that it was all created in the same general time frame. Unfortunately, it was carved in shallow relief and has been subject to much wear, effacing most details. Erosion has also seriously affected the integrity of about 45 animals depicted in large groups on east facing panels at Brag gdong West.

Located east of sMig pa mKhar ru is the Brag gdong East petroglyphic site. This site is itself divided into east and west sectors separated from one another by a few dozen meters of lake shore. The thematic composition of the site includes hunting scenes, animals depicted in isolation, archaic style *mchod rten* and obscured Tibetan inscriptions some of which are Buddhist *mani* mantras. Only a small minority (about 12 figures) of the more than 150 figures found at Brag gdong East are anthropomorphic, and the majority of these are horsemen. Their identification is impeded by the often poor condition of the petroglyphs. On one rock panel we find three yaks, a deer-like animal, a raptor-like figure with outstretched wings and triangular-shaped body, and an anthropomorphous figure with a square head and hourglass-shaped body (P-1g). On another panel there are two standing anthropomorphs and one mounted figure among other more obscured figures (two of which also seem to be standing anthropomorphs) (P-2g). The standing figures may be holding square shields like those found at other rock art sites in Upper Tibet.

On another Brag gdong East rock face there are at least seven deer, three of which either have their legs folded under their bodies in an attitude of rest, or alternatively are running. One of these cervids has the S-shaped body ornamentation. Shown here for inspection are three of these deer, as well as part of another deer and a yak (P-3g). What appears to be a unique composition at Brag gdong seems to feature a pair of mating yaks (P-4g). As these figures are not shown in a hunting context, it cannot be determined whether the wild or domesticated form of the animal was intended in this depiction. A fertility function is suggested by the composition. On another rock face there is a hunting scene depicting deer, *'brong* and one or two mounted hunters (P-5g). At the lower edge of the panel the head of a *'brong* can be seen. In the upper part of the composition one of the mounted archers is in close pursuit of two *'brong* (P-6g). On another panel there are at least seven ungulates, including yaks and what might be a horseman (P-7g).

In the vicinity of a group of five *mchod rten* there are three counterclockwise *g.yung drung* (P-8g), and nearby two other specimens, making up the sum total of this symbol documented at Brag gdong East. More unusual is an unidentified motif whose internal elements resemble the bi-circular motifs we examined at the sGog ra site, although they are contained inside a rectangle (P-9g).

At Brag gdong East there is one example of the *mchod rten*-like typology (P-10g) we have already encountered at bKra shis Do (P-6a) and sKabs ren (P-17d, P-18d). There are also around 20 other examples of *mchod rten* at Brag gdong East. These are depictions of early forms of *mchod rten* or of some variant type of monument whose identity is no longer certain. As in other sites with similar style monuments it cannot be

established with any certainty whether these carvings were made by the Bon po or early Buddhists. This distinction in fact may not even be applicable to the cultural context in which the *mchod rten* were carved.[42] Nevertheless, the absence of Buddhist motifs or inscriptions alongside the *mchod rten,* and the presence of the reverse *g.yung drung,* in the vicinity does favor their creation by non-Buddhists. These Brag gdong compositions and others like them are an important archaeological resource vital to our understanding of how early religious architectural forms developed in western Tibet.

On one rock panel we find a group of five such *mchod rten*, one of which is incomplete, as well as two animals (P-11g). The variable carving techniques used in rendering these depictions, combined with non-uniform levels of wear, indicate that they were produced at different times. This suggests a well established tradition in which these types of monuments played a part. The largest single group of *mchod rten* is comprised of eight specimens (seven of which are shown here) (P-12g). These more elaborate portrayals feature five-tiered structures (symbolizing the five elements of the universe?) surmounted by a circular *tog* and prominent horn-like protrusions, which at least provisionally can be identified as the *bya ru bya gri* of the Bon. Above the row of *mchod rten,* and evidently created in the same general time period, is an S-shaped scroll motif ornamenting the body of an animal. On another panel, a well chiseled specimen exhibits the same structural characteristics (except that it sits on a taller base) (P-13g) as the group of eight. On yet another panel a group of five *mchod rten* conform more to our modern architectural conception of the monument (P-14g), but the largest specimens were depicted with the horn-like finial of the early period and not the characteristic sun and moon (*nyi zla*) of the Buddhists. Another variant style *mchod rten,* depicted with a flag-like finial, is also found at Brag gdong East (P-15g). Like its counterparts it has undergone much wear and repatination, indicating that it is an older form of the monument.

Petroglyphic *mchod rten* with the same kind of horn-like crowns are also found in La dwags, and in La dwags there are types very close in form to those found at the Ra 'brog 'Phrang site (see Francke 1903: figs. I, II, plate I). For example, on a boulder located at the junction of the roads leading to Chushul and sPang gong mTsho there are three *mchod rten* comparable to those of Brag gdong, which were engraved in conjunction with animals including a cervid, a standing archer, a mounted archer, a clockwise *g.yung drung* and early Tibetan inscriptions (Vohra 1995: 429, plate 2). The apparent absence of *g.yung drung* oriented in this direction in association with early *mchod rten* in Upper Tibet, and the lack of inscriptions that attest the Imperial period Tibetan military occupation found in La dwags, may indicate the existence of a different political and religious climate prevailing in the Byang thang in this period. Further west, in Indus Kohistan, a similar genre of early *mchod rten* is associated with

42. Particularly in the early Imperial period, before the abolition of Bon by King Khri srong lDe'u btsan in the late 8th century, distinctions between the two Tibetan religions were just developing and may not yet have filtered down to the far flung corners of western Tibet.

a distinctive cultural milieu (Jettmar 1982: plates 5.3, 7). Some irregularly executed *stupas* in Indus Kohistan, with 'clumsy stylization', are found in conjunction with crude Brahmi inscriptions (circa 8th century?), while others are connected to inscriptions in proto-Sarada (postdate 5th century) (*ibid*. 18, 20). These latter examples are associated with a population who made petroglyphs of lions with a front leg raised (*ibid* 1982: 20). In this context it is worth noting that one of the most common types of lion *thog lcags* in Tibet has one front leg raised. This style of lion and the incidence of comparable *mchod rten* petroglyphs might well be evidence of Zhang zhung-Mon cultural influence over a wide expanse of the western Transhimalaya ranges before or during the Imperial period.

(L-246) Name: Kham pa Rwa co (Tawny Horns). Location: rTsa phug township, Ru thog county.

This petroglyphic site consists of three yaks, another animal, a mounted figure and one other ungulate, probably a deer, which were carved on a limestone formation known as Kham pa Rwa co (elevation 4600 meters). These petroglyphs were skillfully made by removing the dark raspy surface of the limestone cliff face to reveal the smooth light-colored stone below. The exposed limestone surfaces have undergone some weathering but there are no clear indications of when the petroglyphs were produced. Few of the anatomical features of the mounted figure and the animal he or she is riding are visible (P-1h).[43] The identity of the yaks are clearly delineated by the form of the animal.[44] However, in this case one cannot determine whether the wild or domestic form of the animal was intended (P-2h). The largest and most impressive specimen is that probably representing a deer (P-3h).[45] This nearly 50 centimeter long technically sophisticated petroglyph features intricate horizontal horns tipped with a line of volutes and a body adorned with a highly ornamental scroll-like design. The eye of the animal shown (possibly bounding) in profile is also distinguishable. Steppe influences may be indicated in this rendition.

(L-247) Name: Brag lung Nub ma (West Cliff Valley). Location: rTsa phug township, Ru thog county.

East of Kham pa Rwa co there is another site of similarly created petroglyphs in a valley known as Brag lung Nub ma (elevation 4840 meters). In addition to the four carvings of ungulates that could be positively identified, there appear to be a number of others, but they have been nearly completely absorbed by the calcareous precipitate that has formed on the limestone cliff around them. Two of the four recognizable petroglyphs feature deer with prominent tined antlers and S-shaped body designs (P-1i, P-2i).

(L-181) Name: Chu mKhar gyam sGrub phug (Water Castle Rock Shelter Meditation Cave). Location: rDo dmar township, Ru thog county.

43. Also published in Suolang Wangdui 1994, p. 51.
44. Two of these are published in Suolang Wangdui 1994, p. 76.
45. This petroglyph was published in Suolang Wangdui 1994, p. 76, 77.

At the base of the formation sheltering the Chu mKhar gyam sGrub phug (see p. 53) there is a small group of archaic red ochre pictographs featuring a 'tree', two counterclockwise *g.yung drung*, *nyi zla*, three sunbursts (only two shown here) and perhaps one or two other obscured motifs (P-1j).[46] More pictographs are found along the right wall of the Chu mKhar gyam cavern. The most notable one depicts a *mchod rten* also painted in red ochre (P-2j). The design of the *mchod rten* features a tiered base with arches (not unlike those found in *bstan pa phyi dar* examples), small rounded *bum pa* and a long spire terminating in a round *tog* and horn-like extensions. Nearby, in yellow ochre, there are several small unidentified designs, including a square with a cross and a segmented rectangular motif. Another of these designs consists of concentric ovals (P-3j).

On another section of the right wall of the Chu mKhar gyam sGrub phug there is a poorly preserved panel of western Tibetan Buddhist frescos (P-4j). Although not as refined as the famous frescos in the monasteries associated with Lo tsa' ba Rin chen bZang po, it does suffice to document the Buddhist period occupation of the cave. A layer of light brown pigment was laid down on the cave wall, which was then covered by motifs painted in red, orange, blue and white. The motifs include a princely figure, a walking figure, a *mchod rten*, and outside of the photograph published in this work, a tree and a geometric design consisting of squares. This *byang chub* style *mchod rten* (P-5j) contrasts with the one we examined above, which appears to be an older variant.

(L-248) Name: Gri'u Chu thang? Location: lCags sgang township, Ru thog county.

This small site of just a few petroglyphs is found on a cliff not more than two meters from the main road linking Ru thog with the prefectural capital (elevation 4400 meters). For several decades vehicles have been regularly splashing mud on these petroglyphs, and they are now covered in an obdurate sandy soot. The most notable compositions include that of an anthropomorph and stag pecked into the rock surface (P-1k). This evidently non-hunting petroglyph almost certainly dates to the pre-Buddhist period. Also deserving special mention is a *mchod rten*-like monument inscribed into the cliff (P-2k).The pinnacle possibly shows evidence of being modified from a *bya ru bya gri* to the Buddhist *nyi zla*. Also at the small Gri'u Chu thang site there are several counterclockwise *g.yung drung*.

(L-249). Name: Chu lung (Water Valley). Location: lCags sgang township, Ru thog county.

This petroglyphic site is located on cliffs that almost come down to meet the watercourse on the right side of the Chu lung valley (elevation 4650 meters). Dominated by hunting and combat compositions, the petroglyphs of Chu lung were the prerogative of males, as these were the activities of men (so far as we know). The style of manufacture of the petroglyphs (shallow relief and full removal of the rock surfaces from the figures), and the quality of execution (not particularly adroit and generally constrained in form), suggest a relatively late date for the site. However, there are no Buddhist inscriptions or

46. This panel was published in Suolang Wangdui 1994, p. 94.

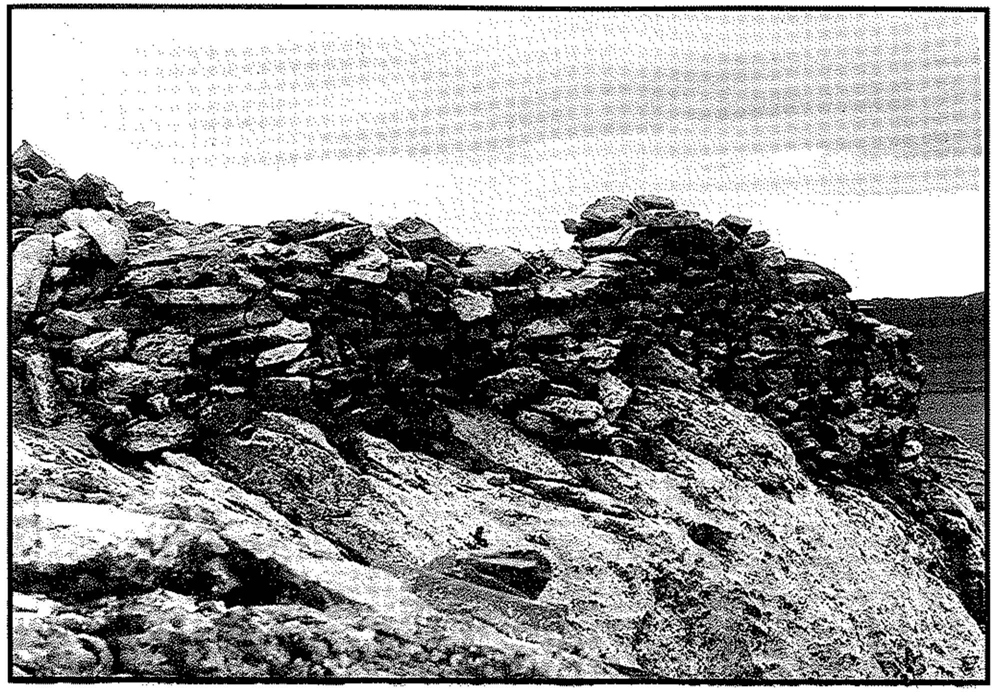
symbology at Chu lung and therefore the rock art was not produced in a Buddhist dominated environment.

The largest panel found here measures 2.3 meters by 1.9 meters and contains about 130 figures of humans and animals (mostly or all ungulates with the *'brong* probably dominating). There are around six mounted hunters and six hunters on foot in the various scenes of the panel. Like other petroglyphs at Chu lung, these were carved in shallow relief and are therefore especially susceptible to effacement through erosion and weathering. In one big panel composition a large figure (13 centimeters in height) brandishes bow and arrow-like objects (P-1l). In close proximity to this figure are two bi-circular designs, not unlike those we have encountered at other sites in Ru thog, in addition to ungulates and possibly birds and other anthropomorphous figures. This composition may depict a magico-ritual theme of some kind. In another section of the panel at least one horseman and two figures on foot, possibly carrying square-shaped shields, share the rock face with a wide selection of animals (P-2l). In another part of the big panel a figure is mounted on a horse with a hyperbolic long neck; this represents one of the clearest and most detailed constituent images of the montage (P-3l).

At various other locations at Chu lung there are four pairs of what might be best described as dueling figures (P-4l, P-5l, P-6l, P-7l). Such petroglyphs act as independent corroboration for literary accounts that speak of the martial propensities of the early Tibetans.[47] In one of the compositions two figures in long robes face one another with what appear to be bows, and a third figure in a similar attitude looms some distance away (P-4l). However, it is not entirely clear whether they are fighting or hunting. In another scene two figures, also attired in long robes, face one another with square shields at the ready, at least one of whom is pointing a bow and arrow (P-5l). In two other compositions pairs of figures are locking shields, leaving little doubt that they are engaged in combat or some type of martial contest (P-6l, P-7l).

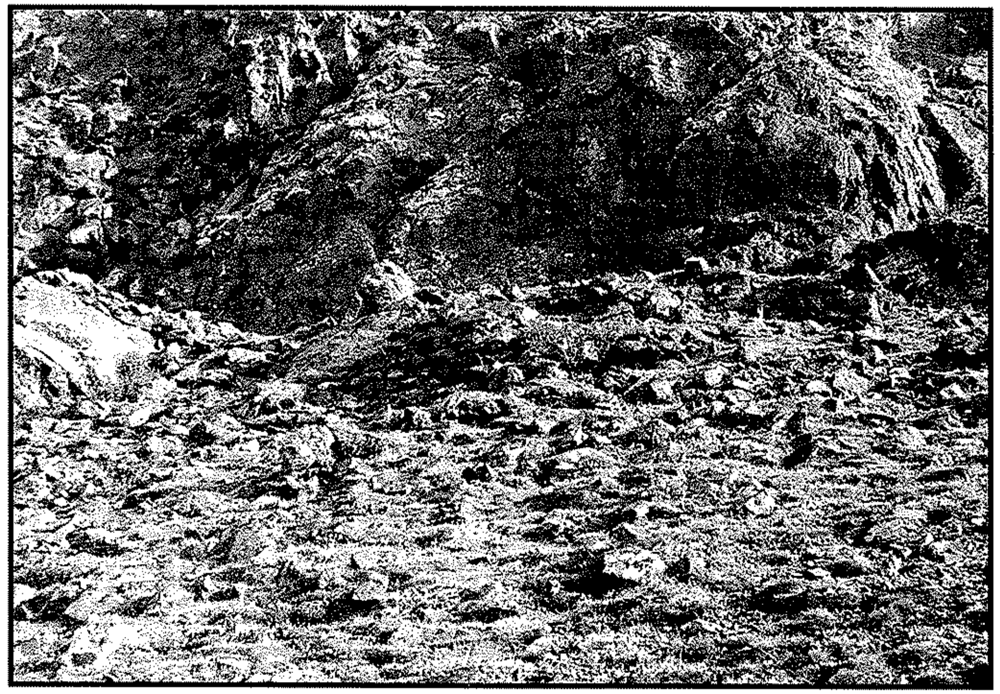
47. These are discussed in Bellezza 2001, pp. 56-75.

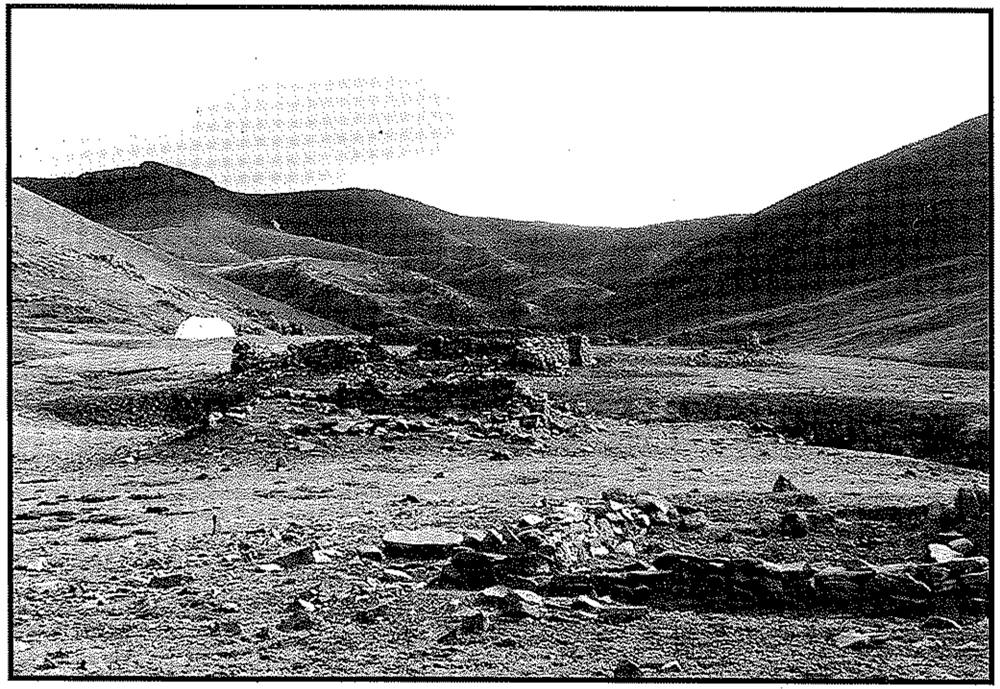
Photographs & Maps



Ia : sKyes ri Khro bo sTobs rgyal mKhar.

Ib : gSham gdong Brag dkar. Fragmentary foundations are visible at the foot of the escarpment.

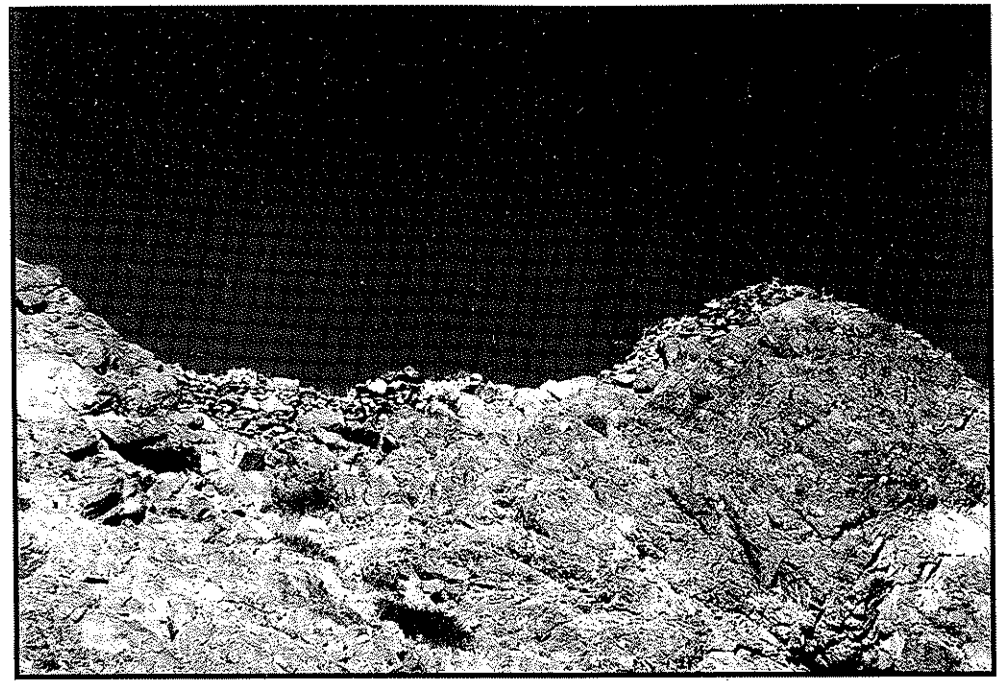




Ic : Ri rgod. In the foreground is the foundation of 'Genghis Khan's residence' and in the background various corrals associated with the Mongol leader.

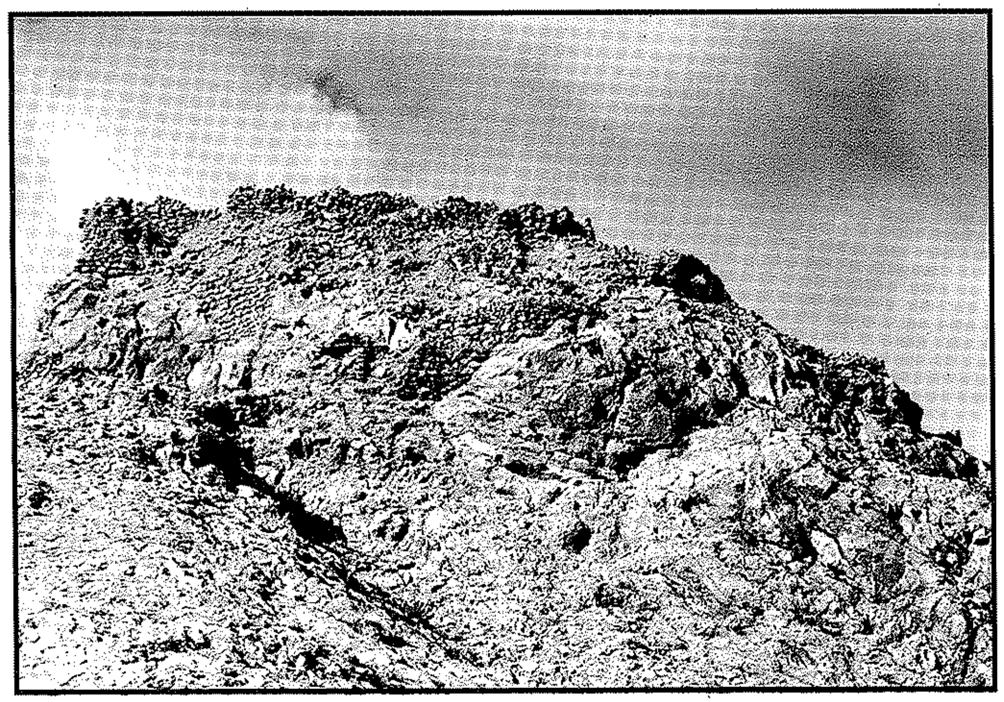
Id : Bis rdza dmag 'thab sa. One of the small ruins located on the summit.

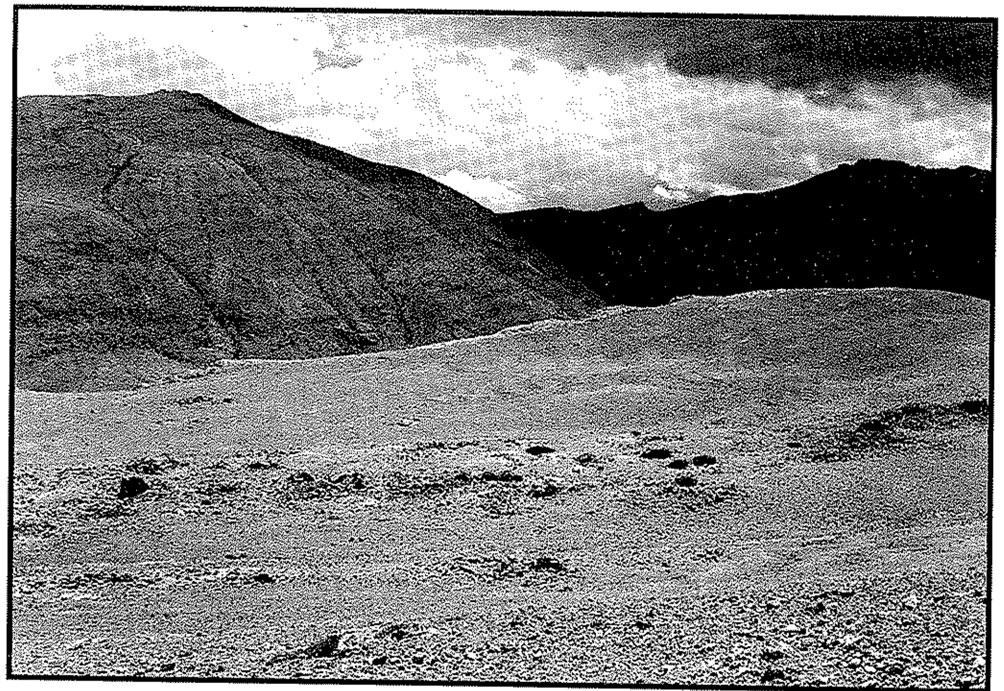




Ie : Mon mkhar Ser nag. Part of the ruins on the summit.

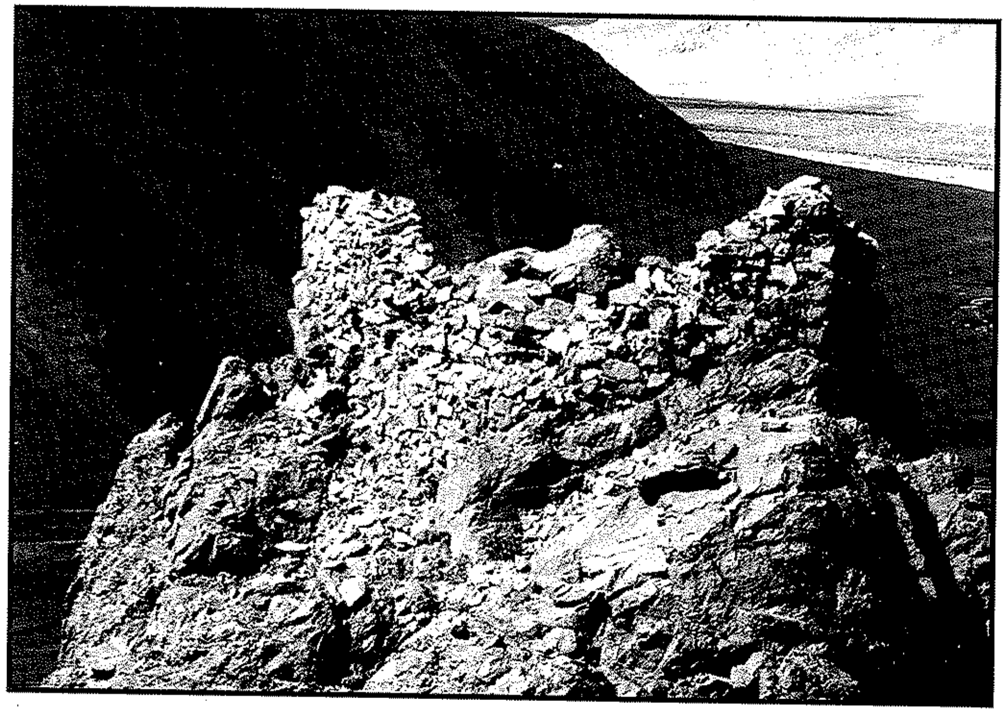
If : sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog. East Complex.

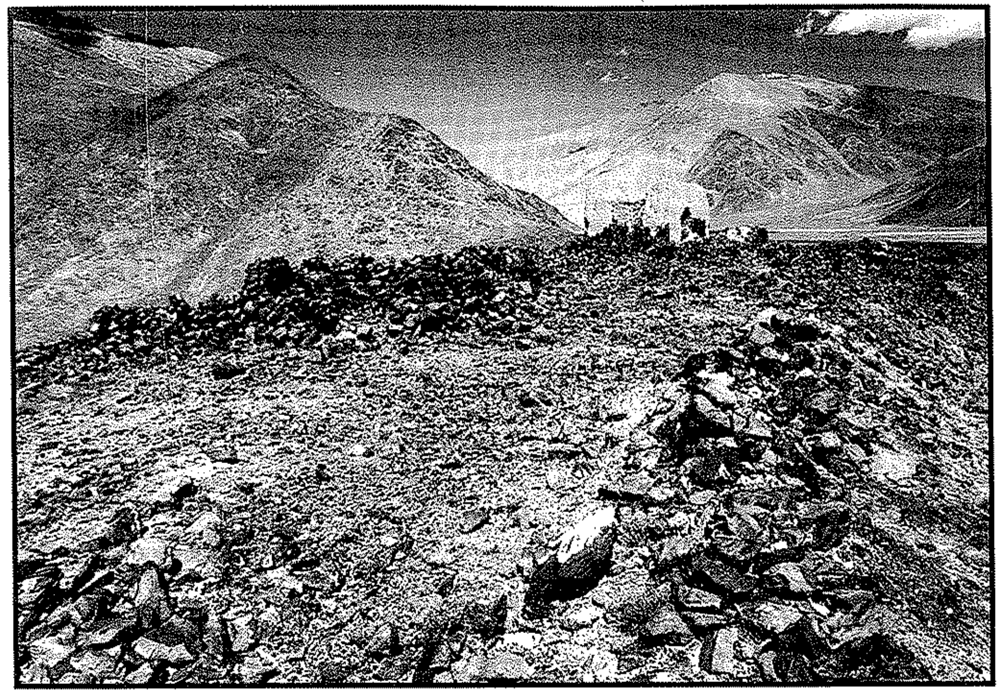




Ig : Sha ro Mon dur.

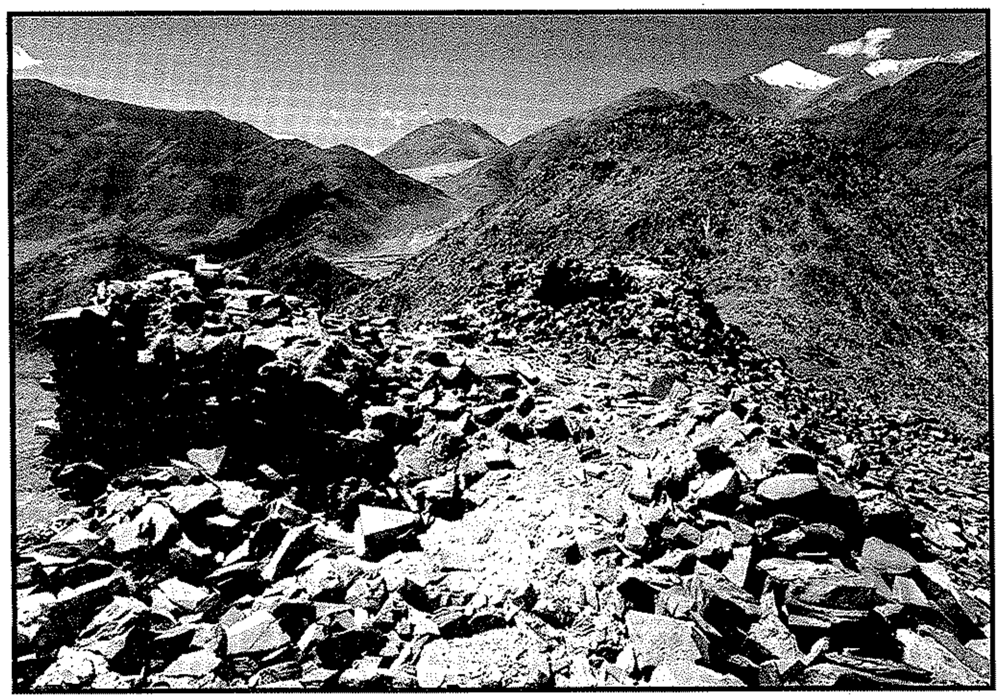
Ih : sKabs ren Gyang gog.





Ii : 'Tsher lung mKhar nag Central sector.

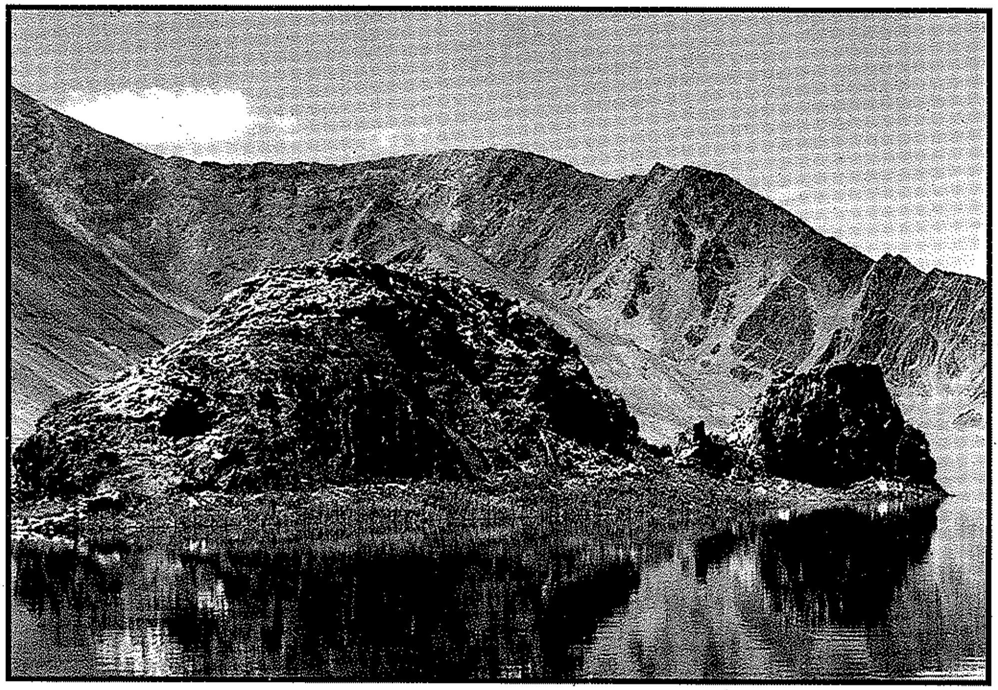
Ij : Brag phug. Parts of the Middle and Upper complexes are visible in this photograph. Note the rampart encircling the Upper complex.

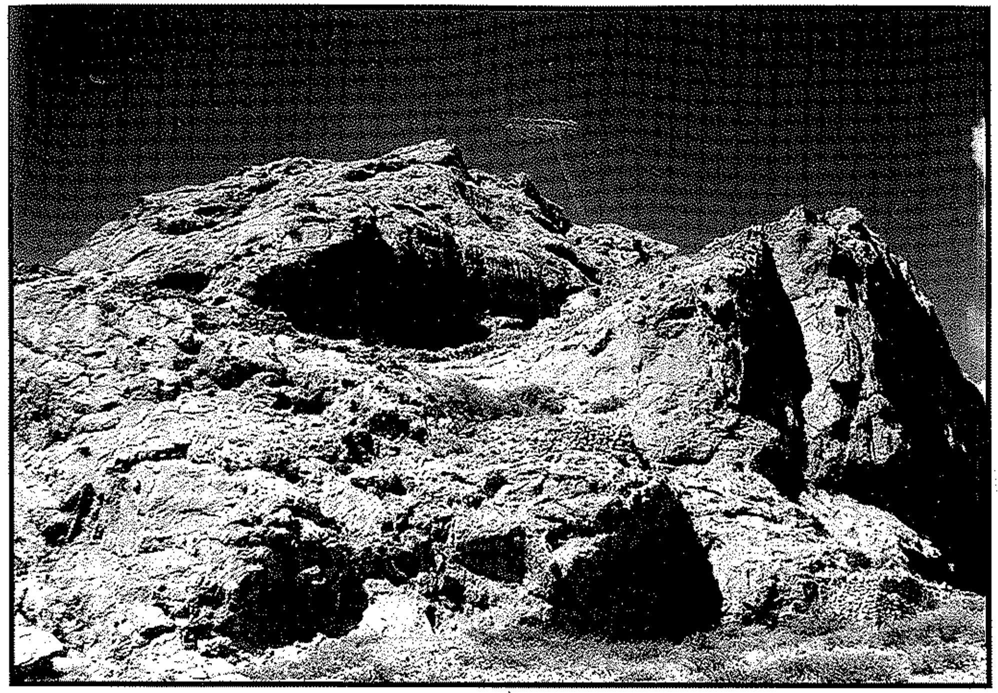




Ik : rTsa ma. Part of the single line of lower buildings.

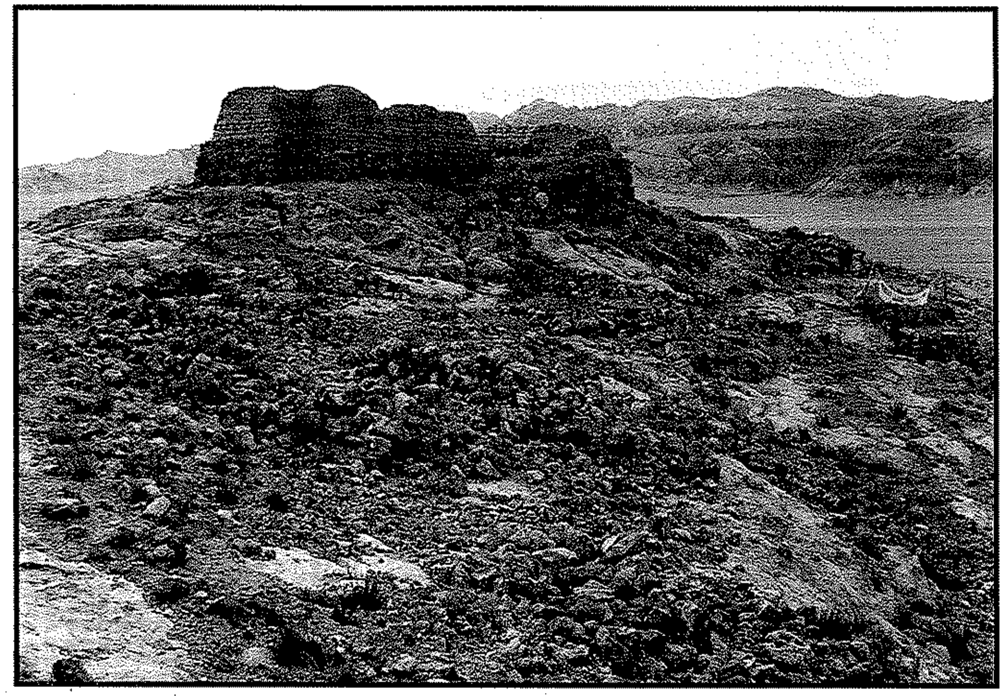
Il : sMig pa mKhar ru.

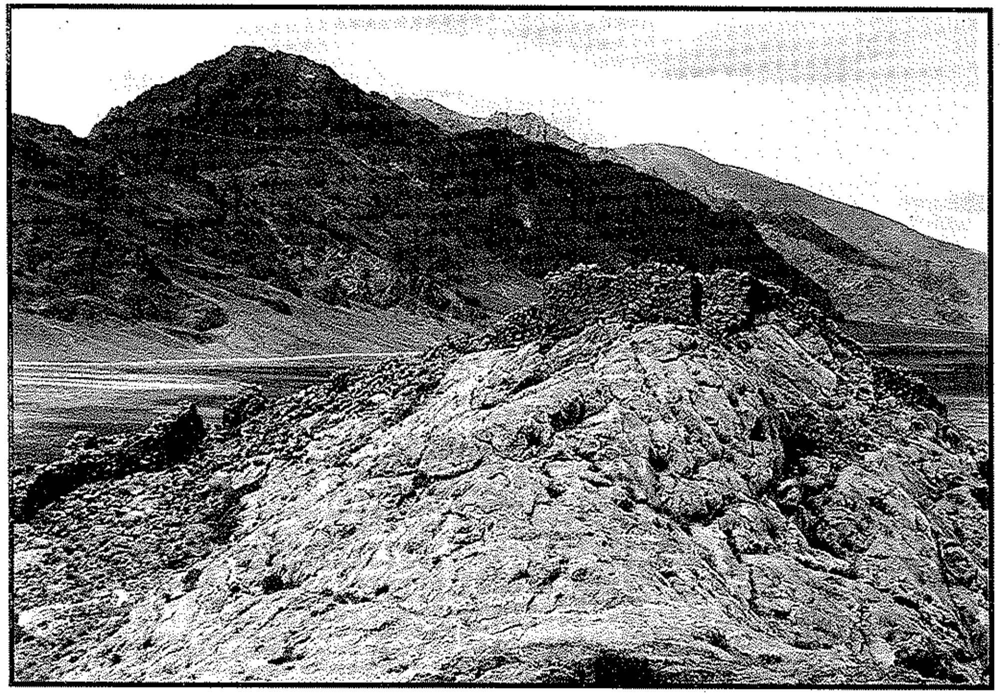




Im : Me long Mon mKhar. East formation ruins.

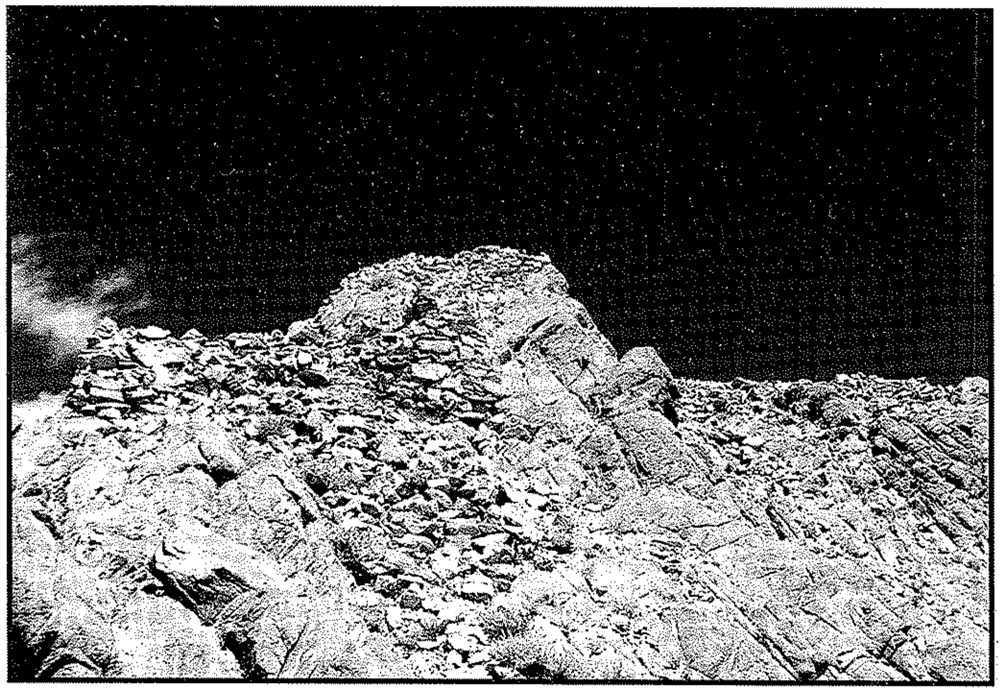
In : sDings leb sNgon po. Ruins of the monastery on the summit, as well as wall footings belonging to the 'Mon castle' are visible.

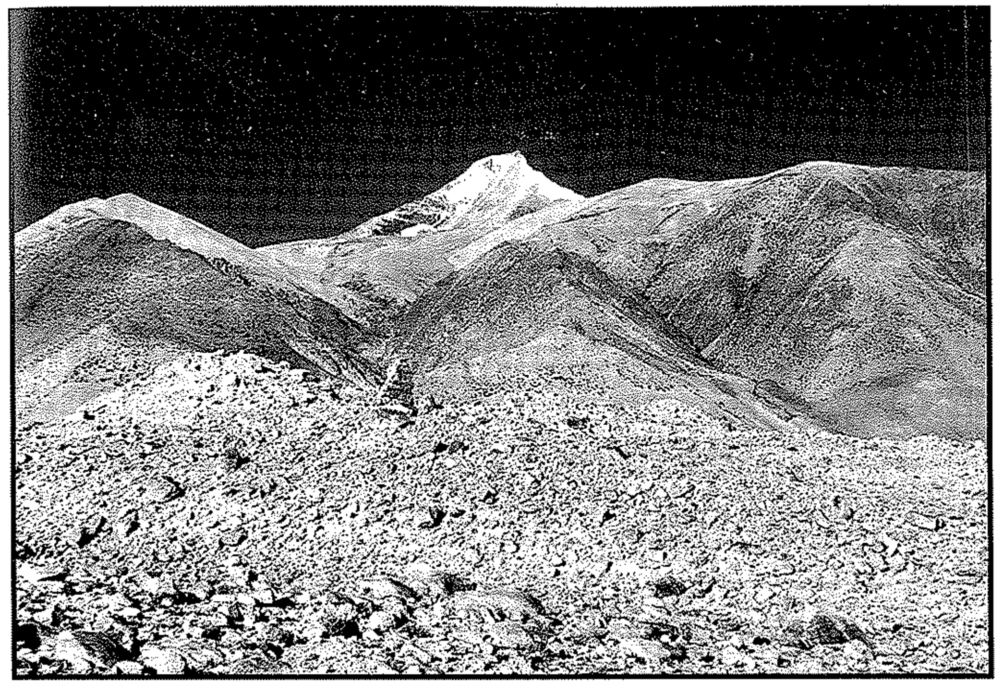




Io : Chu mKhar gyam. Ruined buildings and ramparts on the summit.

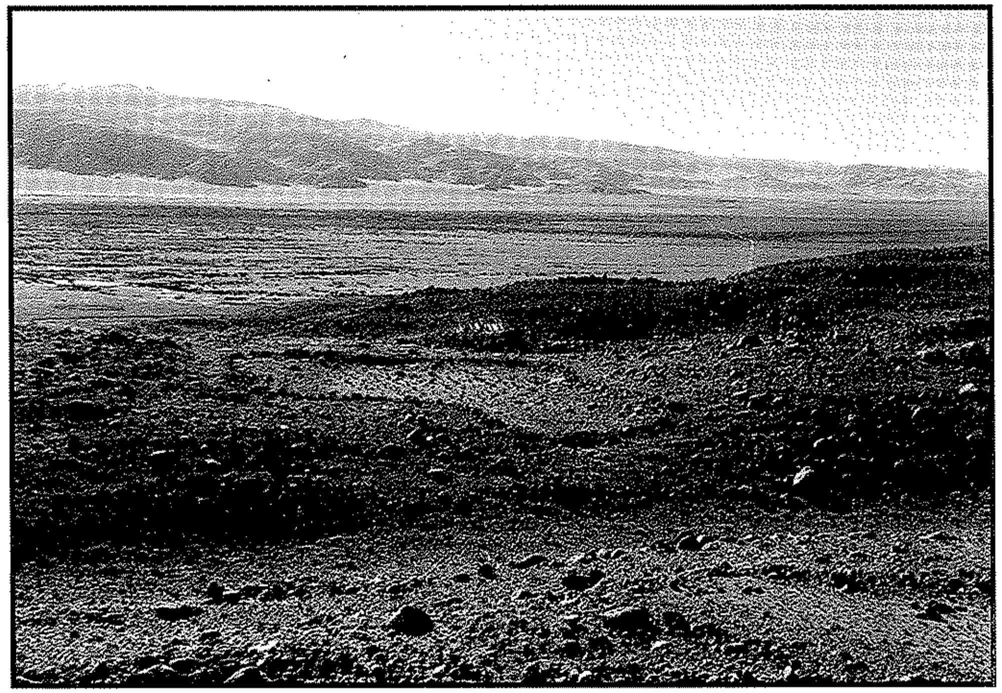
Ip : Ping Ser po. Summit structures.

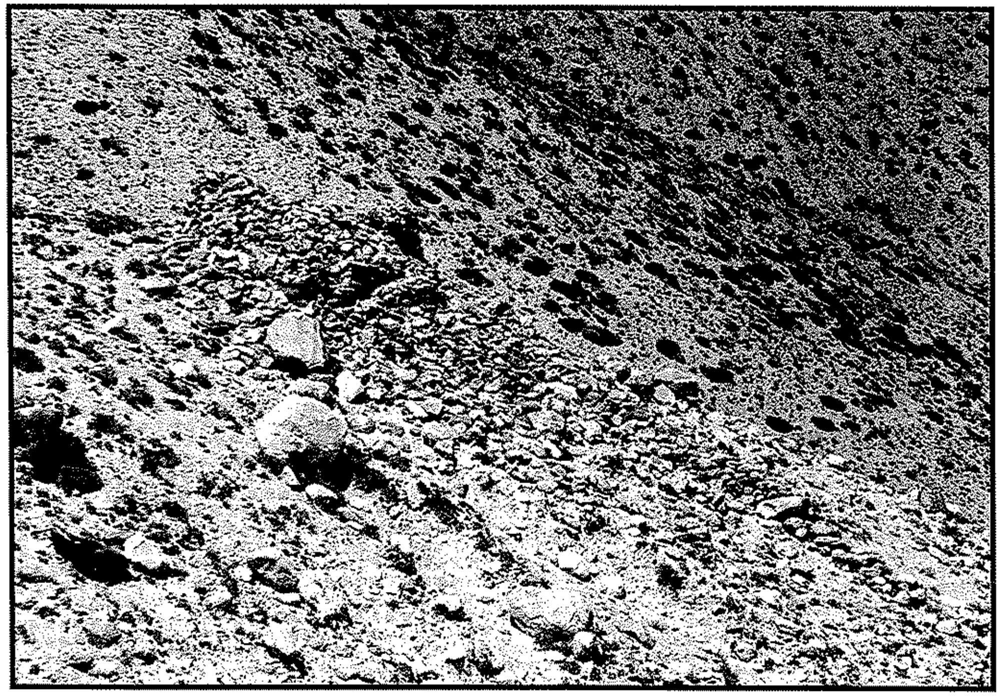




Iq : mChong gog Mon mKhar.

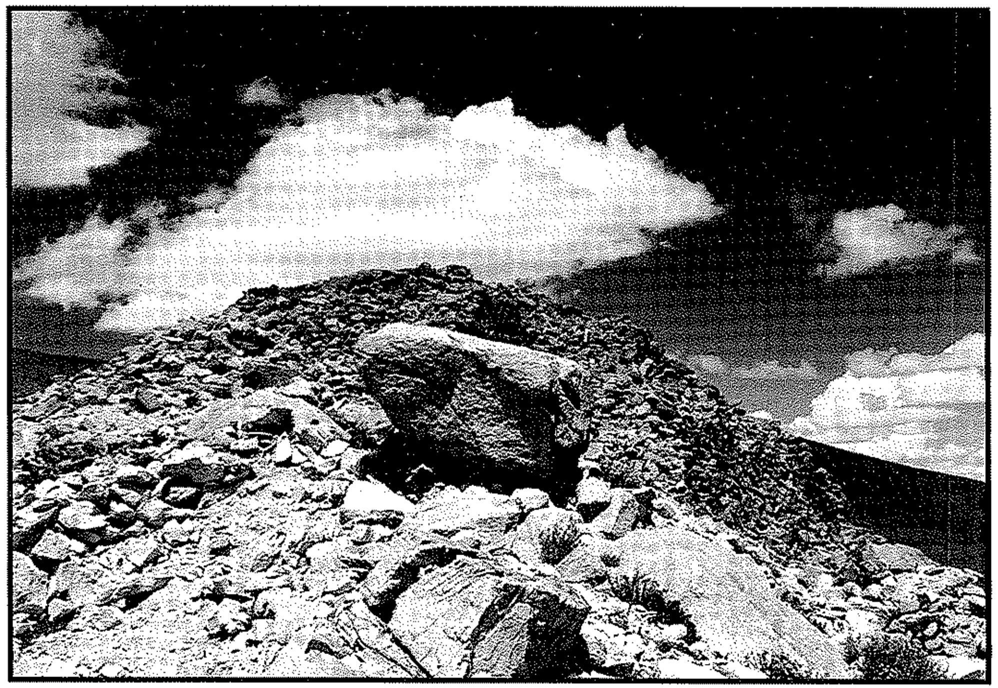
Ir : mChong gog Mon mKhar. The remains of 'Mon' agricultural fields.





Is : Ma lung mKhar.

It : Ar gog mKhar ru. Part of the summit complex is visible.

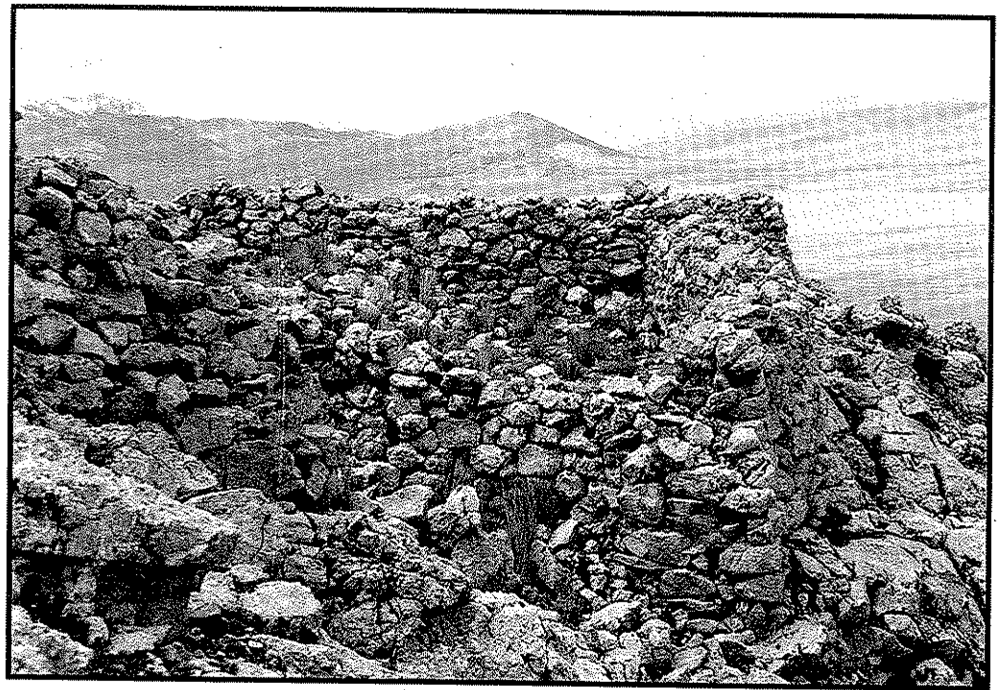




Iu : Khyung lung dNgul mKhar. A section of the long wall on the west rim of the Upper sector.

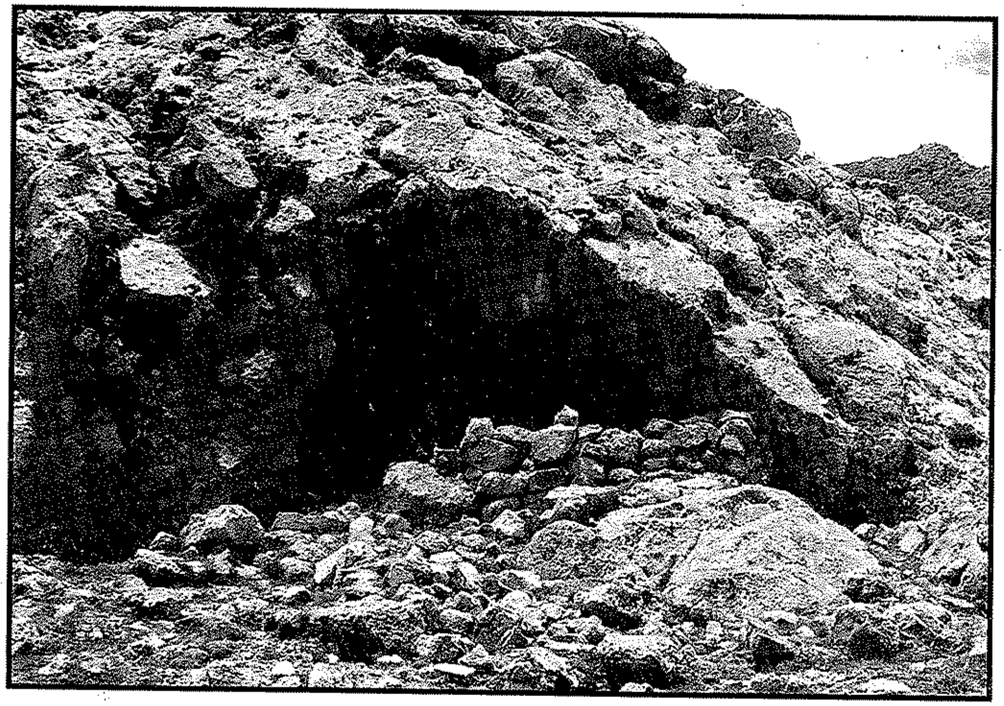
Iv : Gangs Ti se'i Bon mKhar.

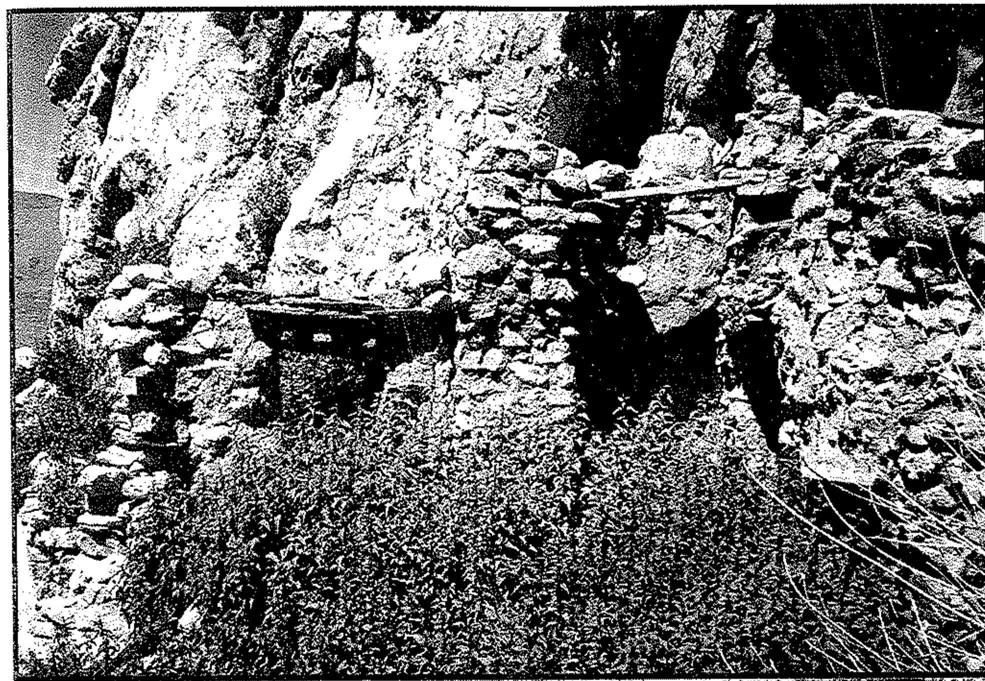




IIa : sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling. Fortifications on the summit.

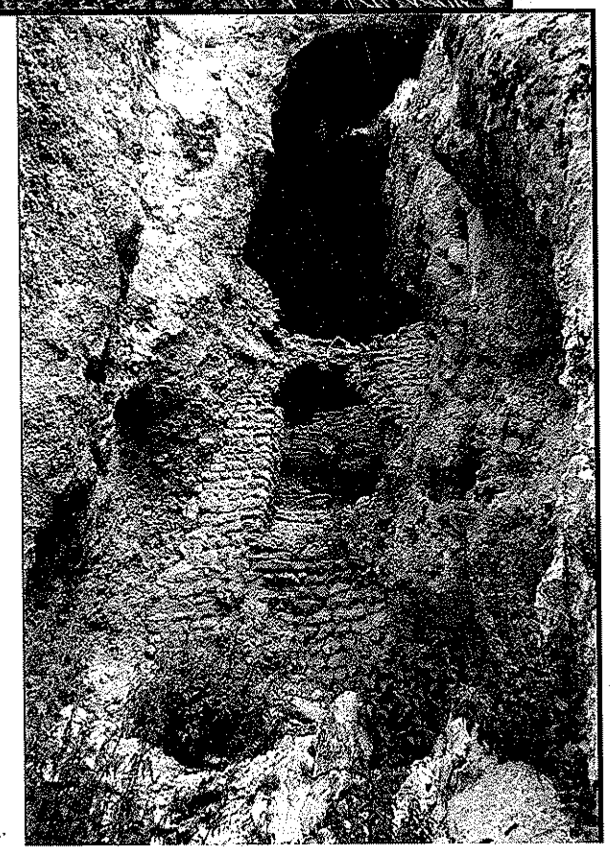
IIb : sTag Brag khung. Cave I.





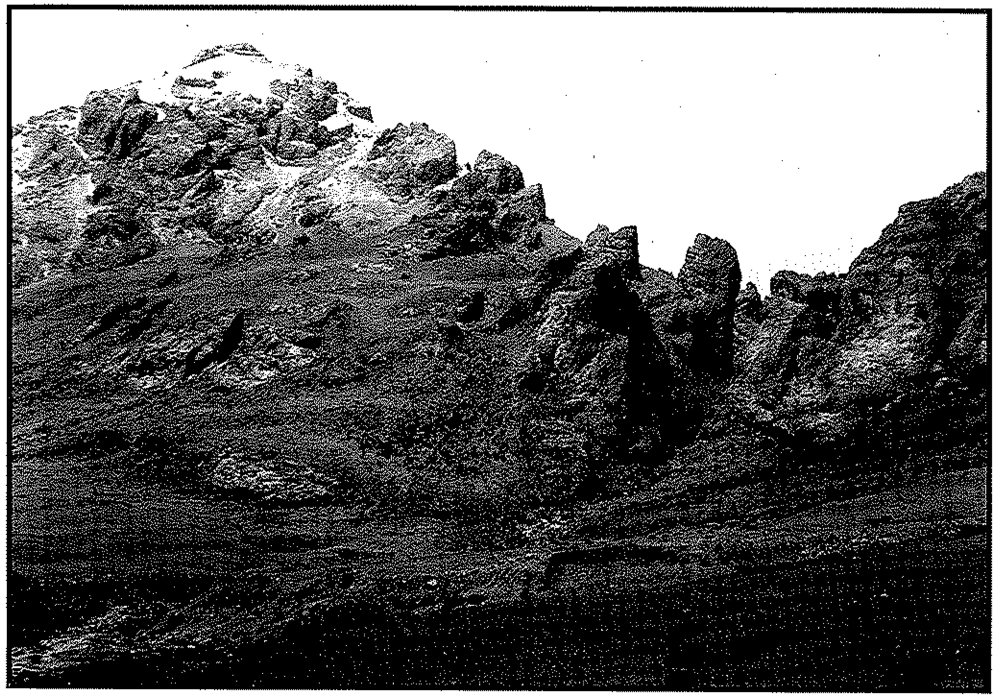
▲

IIc : rDzong dKar po. Structure VI. Note the stone beams spanning the walls of the outer rooms.



▶

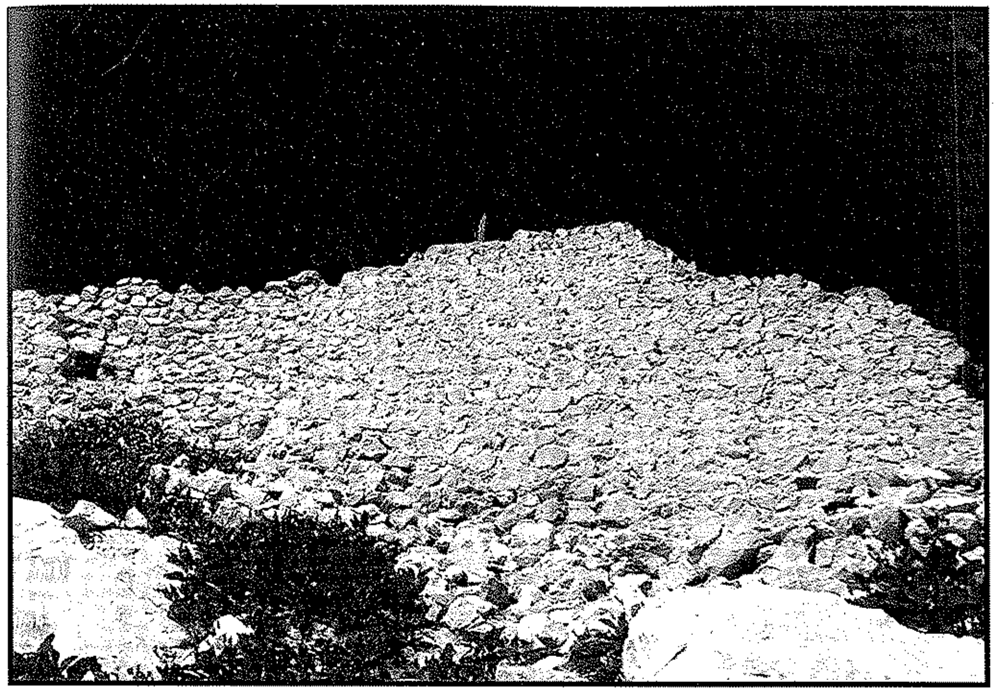
IId : Brag 'khor sgang.



IIe : Ma mig Brag dkar. The Brag dkar formation.

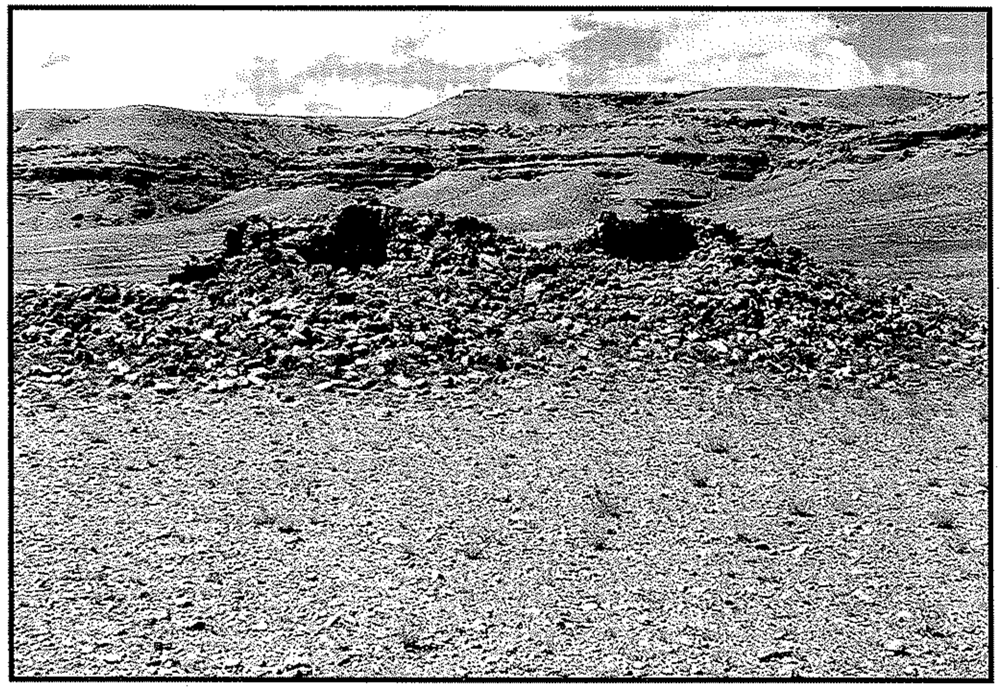
IIf : bTsag tig.

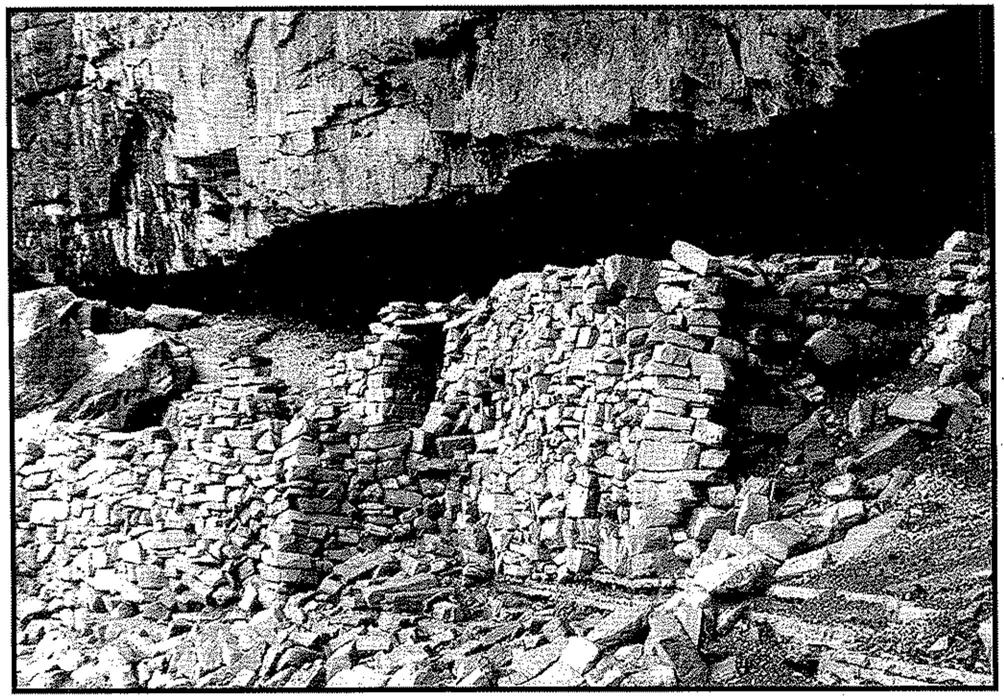




IIg : Chu mKhar Gyam sGrub phug. Part of the enclosing wall.

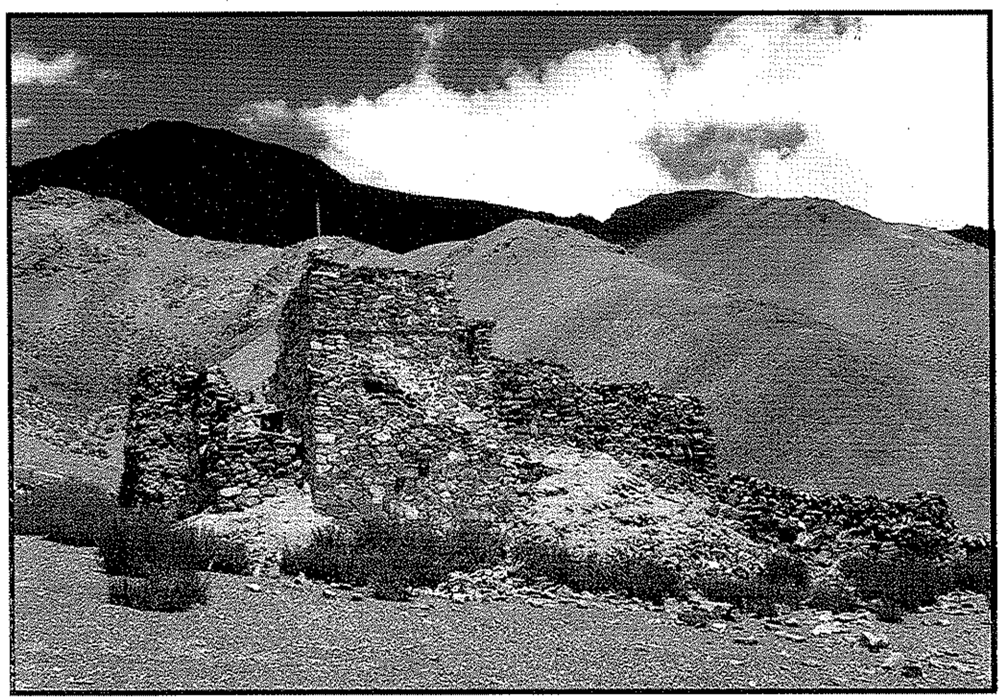
IIh : Gu ru Gyam dGon pa. The largest ruin on the shelf above the escarpment.

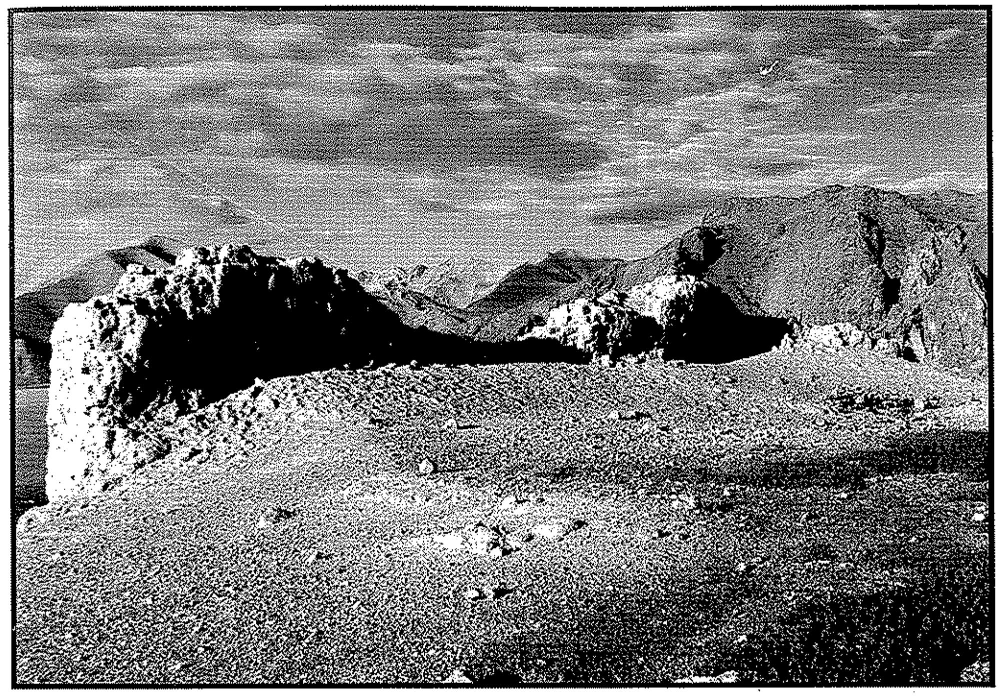




IIi : Shel 'dra. Largest structure with a partially intact stone roof located west of the hermitage.

IIIa : sMon lam rDzong. dGon pa sMon lam.

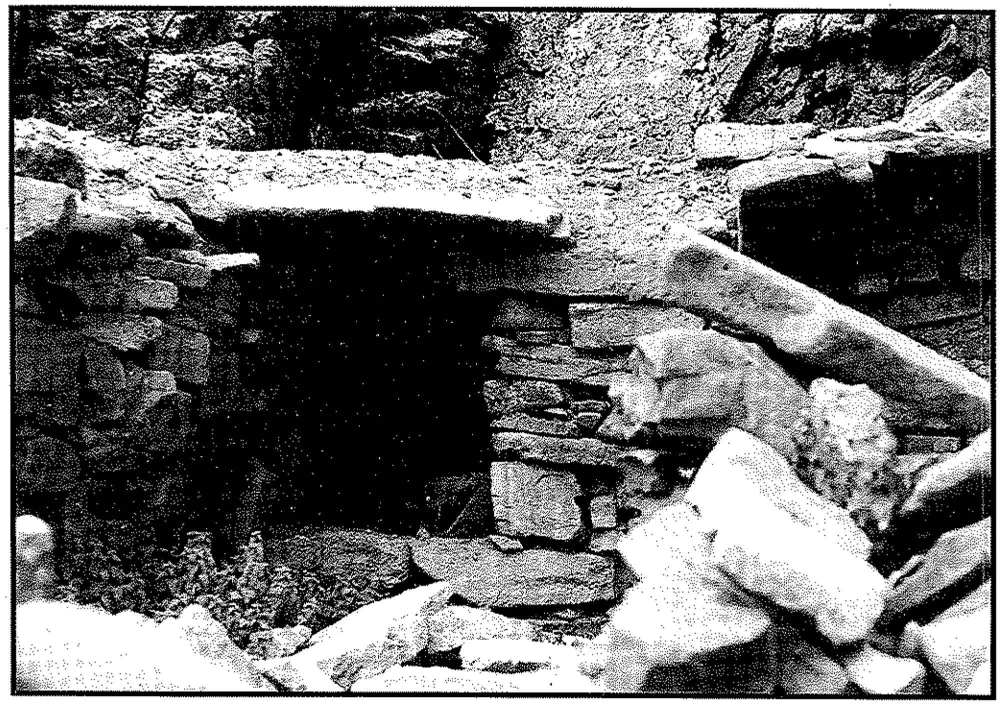




IIIb : Gog rtse Khang dmar.

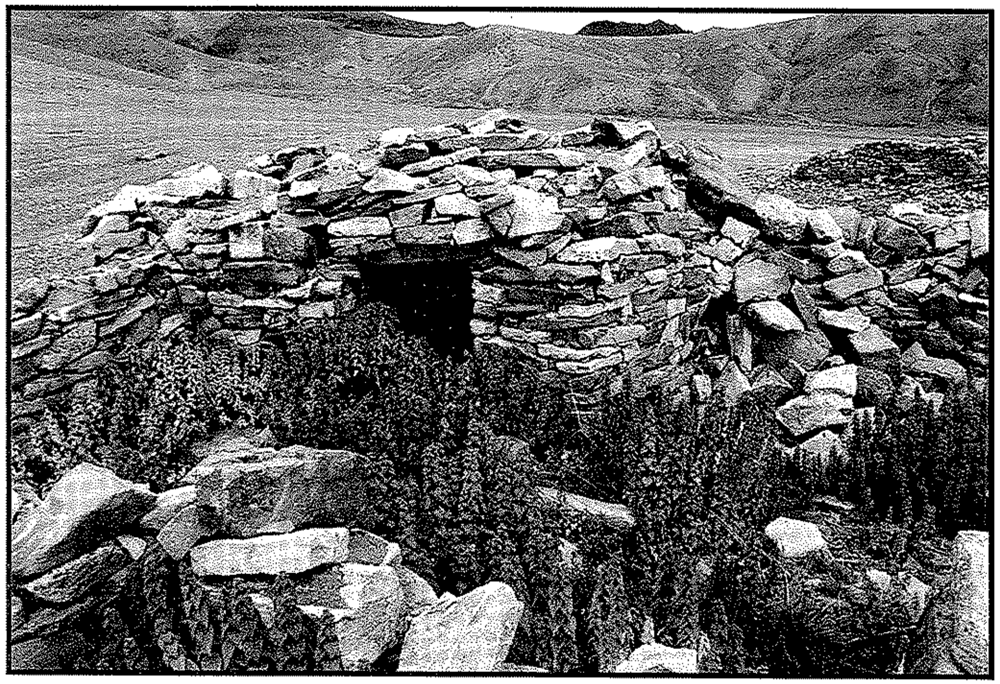
IIIc : rGyang grags rDo khang. Upper West XII.

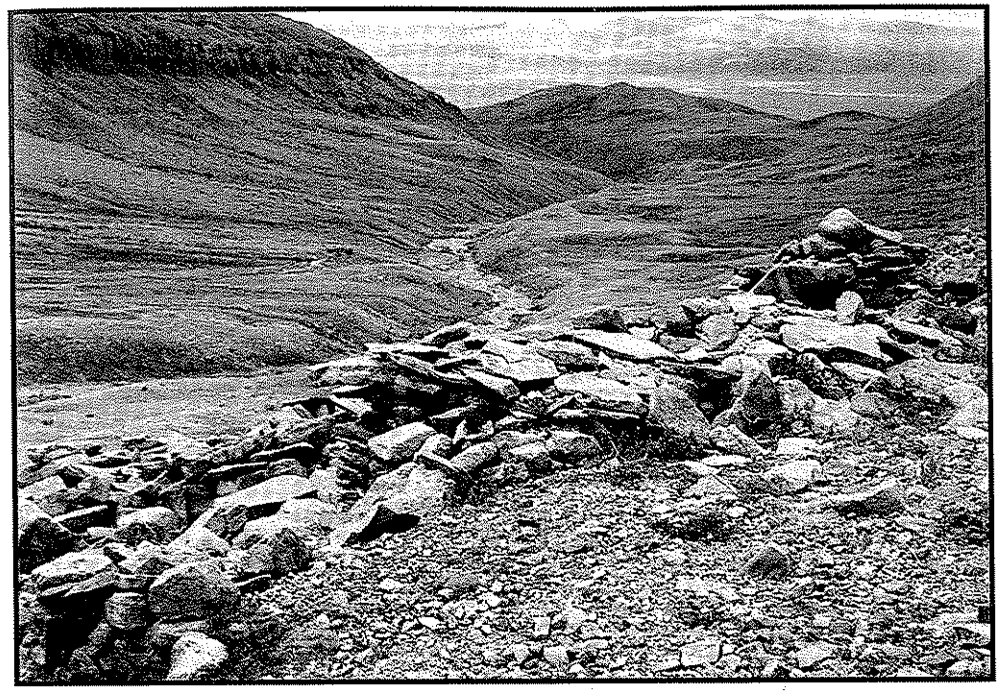




IIId : rGyang grags rDo khang. Upper West XIV. Note the intact corbels and roof slabs.

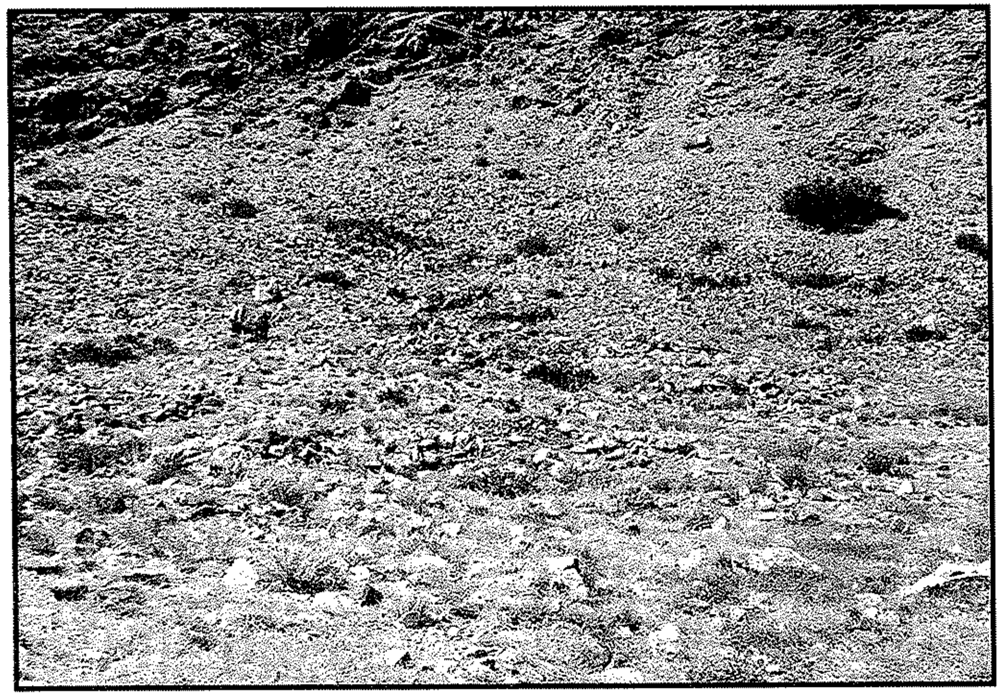
IIIe : rGyang grags Lower Main Group. Main site, partially intact building in the west complex.

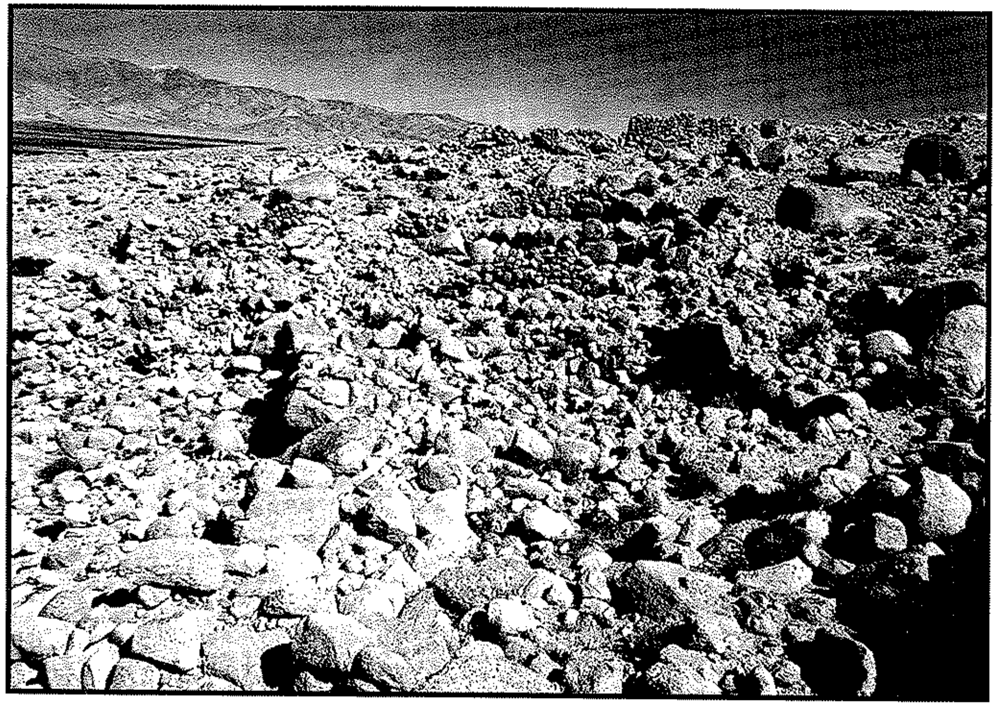




IIIf : Se lung rDo khang. *rDo khang* I.

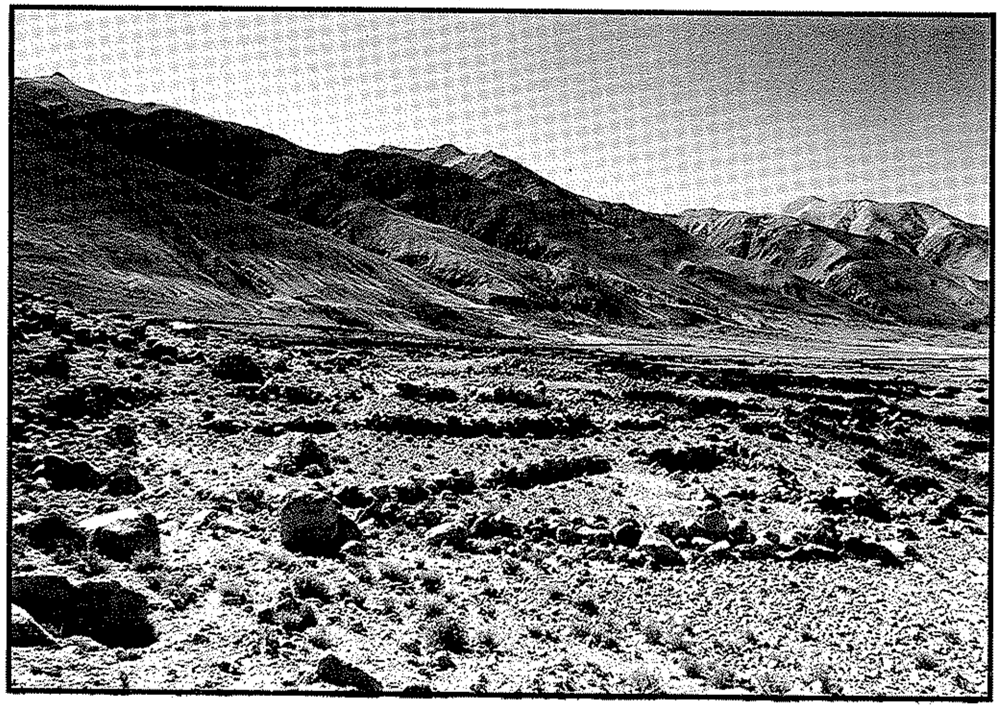
IVa : Khog ra.

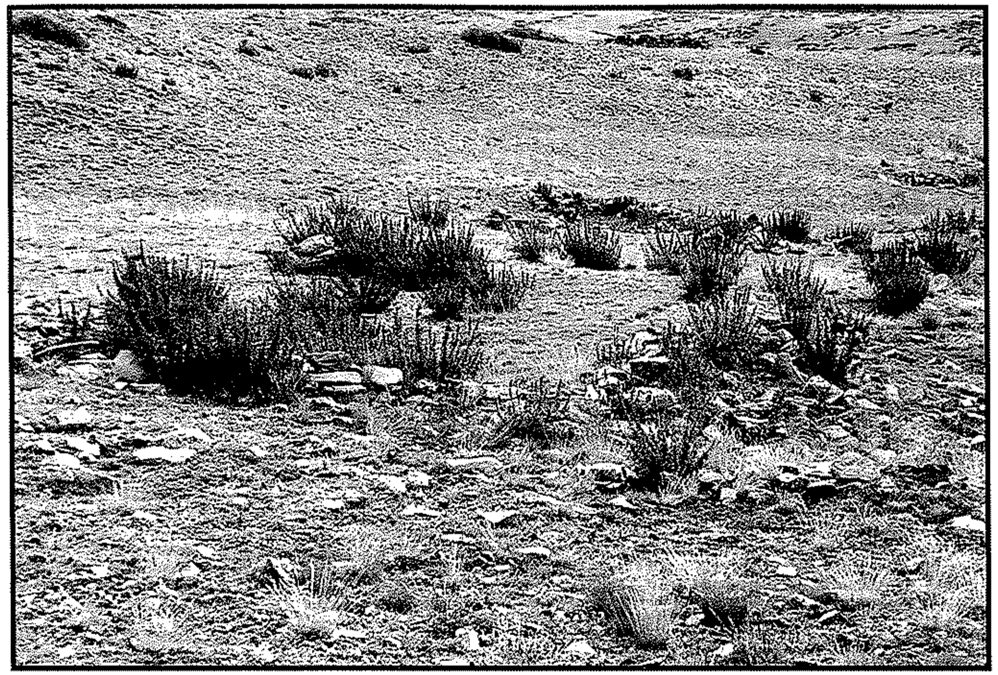




IVb : Zhing ka gong.

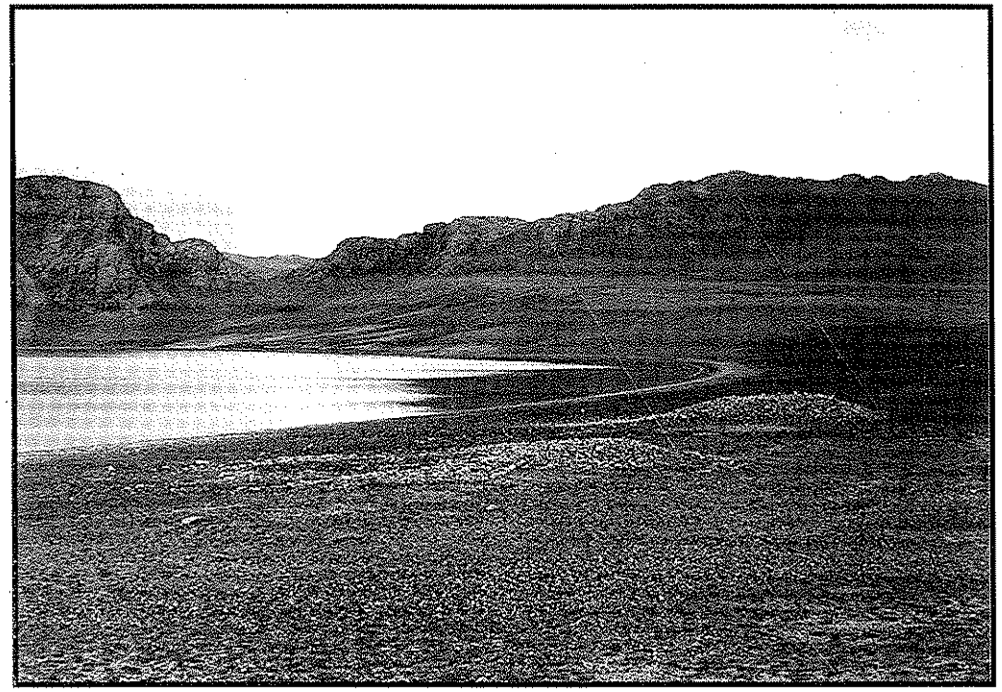
IVc : Zhing ka gong. Defunct fields.

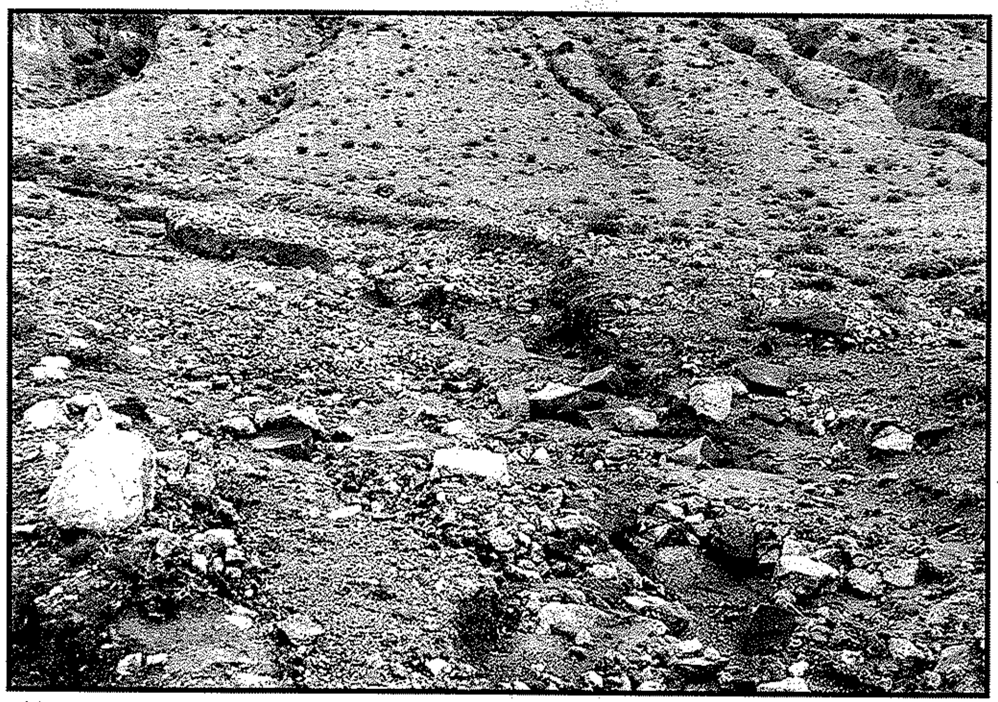




IVd : mChod rten Gong bzang. Fragmentary foundations.

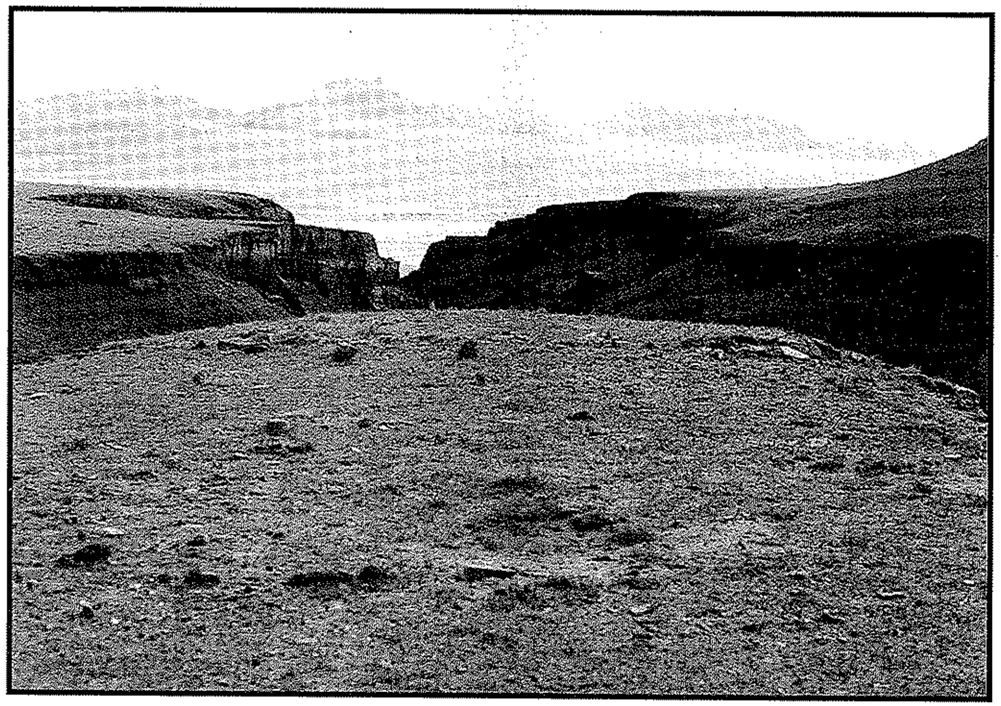
Va : Lug rdo sPungs lhas Mon ra. The two better preserved lake-shore structures are visible.

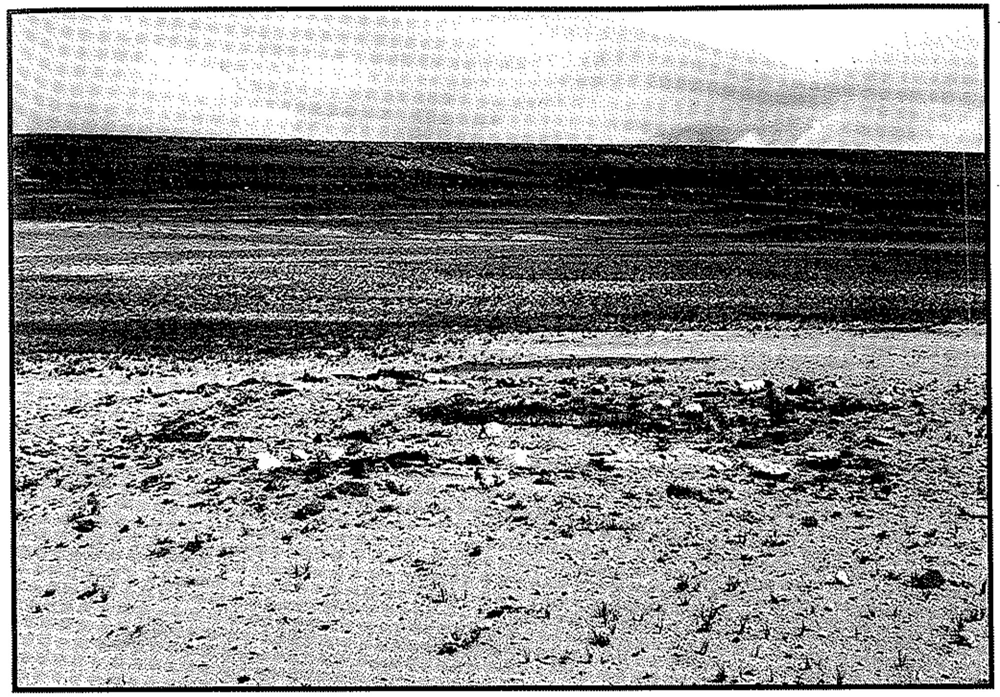




Vb : rNya la sNgo ril Mon dur. The stones that formed the superstructure of this flood damaged grave are scattered around the site.

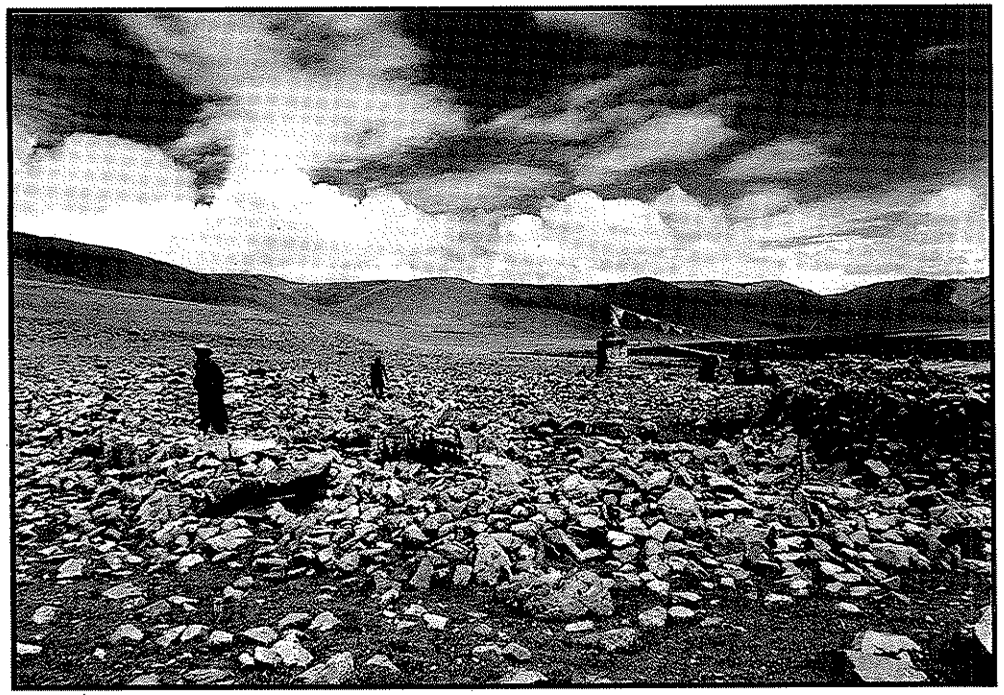
Vc : g.Yu shur. Mon *dur khung*.

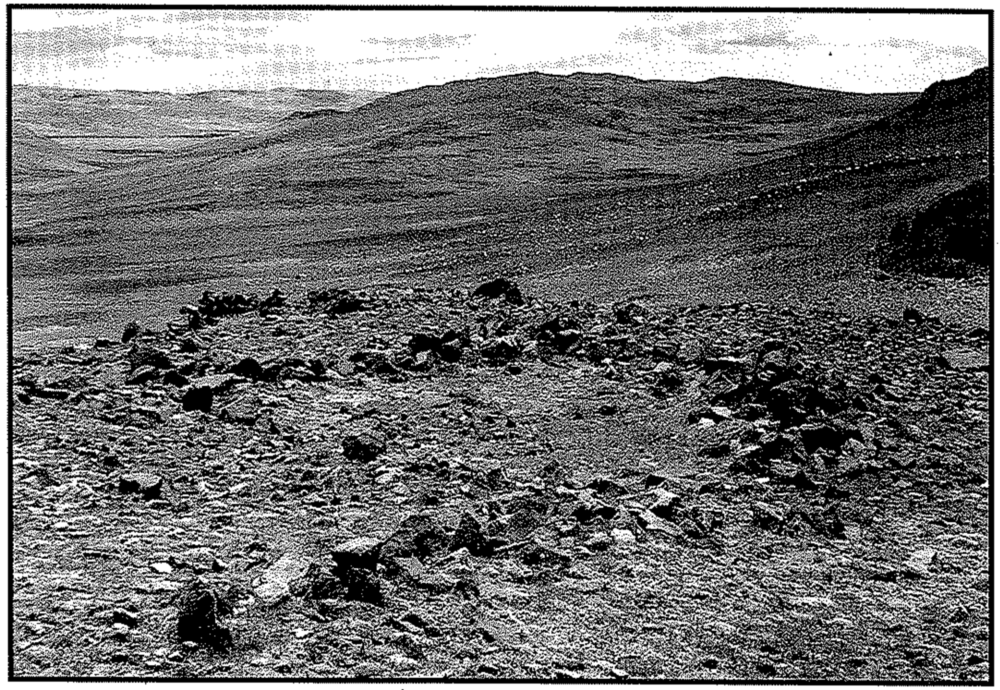




Vd : Gram phyag. Mon *dur khung*.

Ve : Mon ra Yar skyed. rDzong chen.

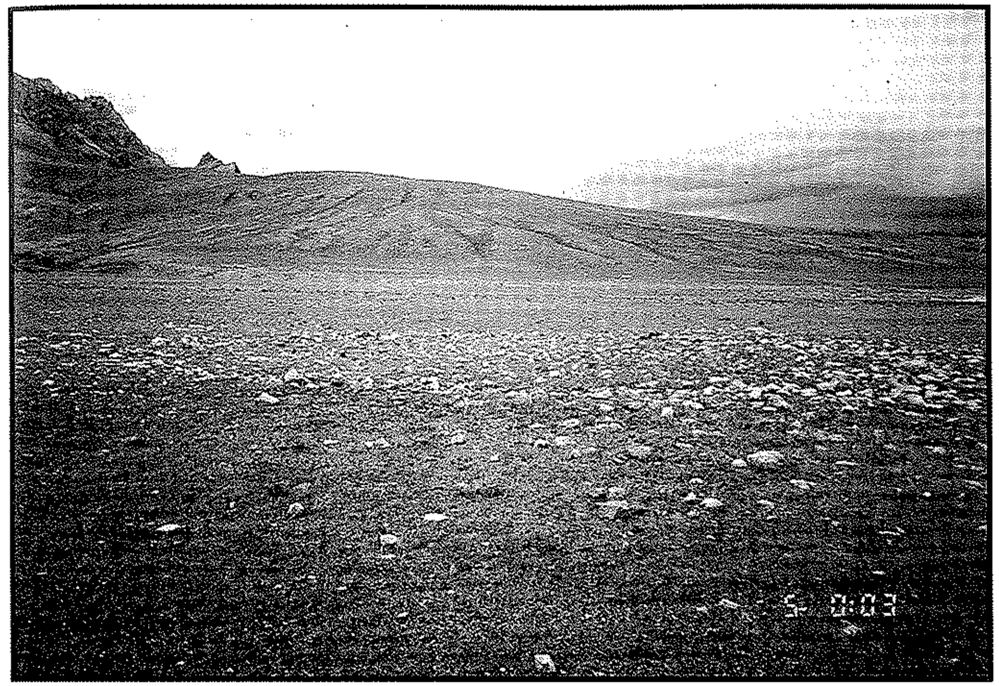




Vf : rGod tshang. Structures on the lower shelf.

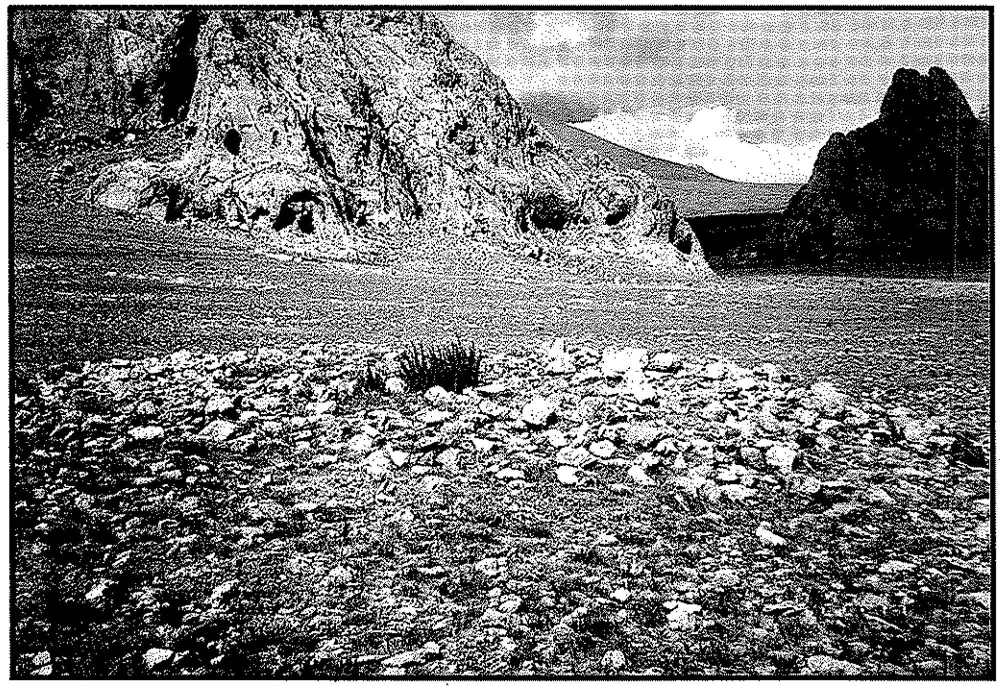
Vg : Lu ma dKar mo Mon dur. One of the structures.





Vh : Khrog lam Mon ra. One of the larger Mon *ra*.

Vi : Gu ru Rin po che sGrub phug Mon ro. The largest Mon *ro*.

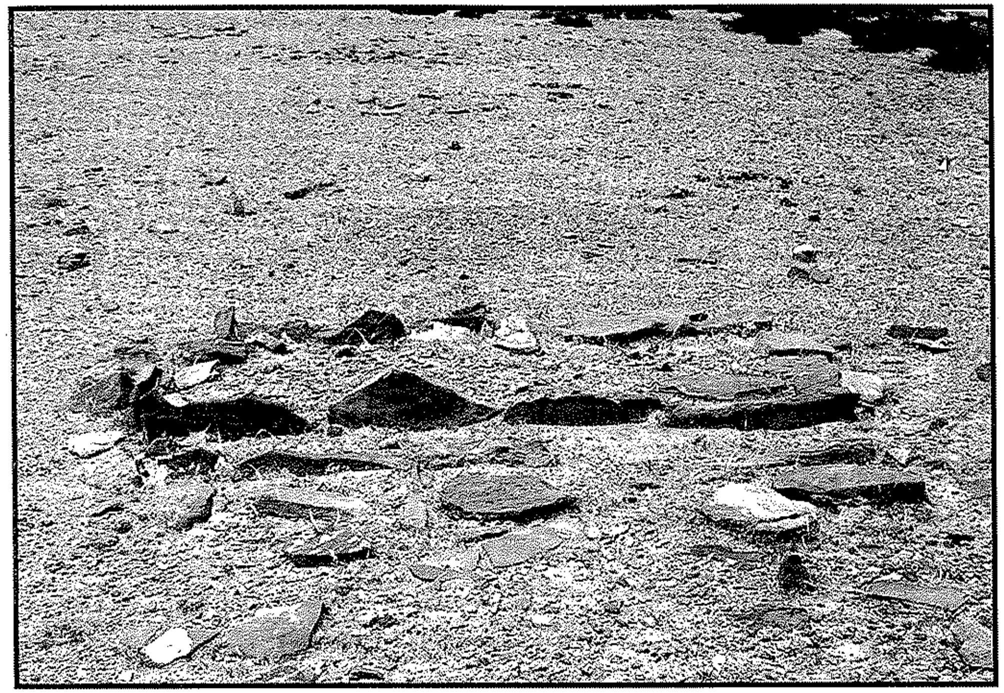




Vj : Sag the Mon ro. One of the rectangular structures.

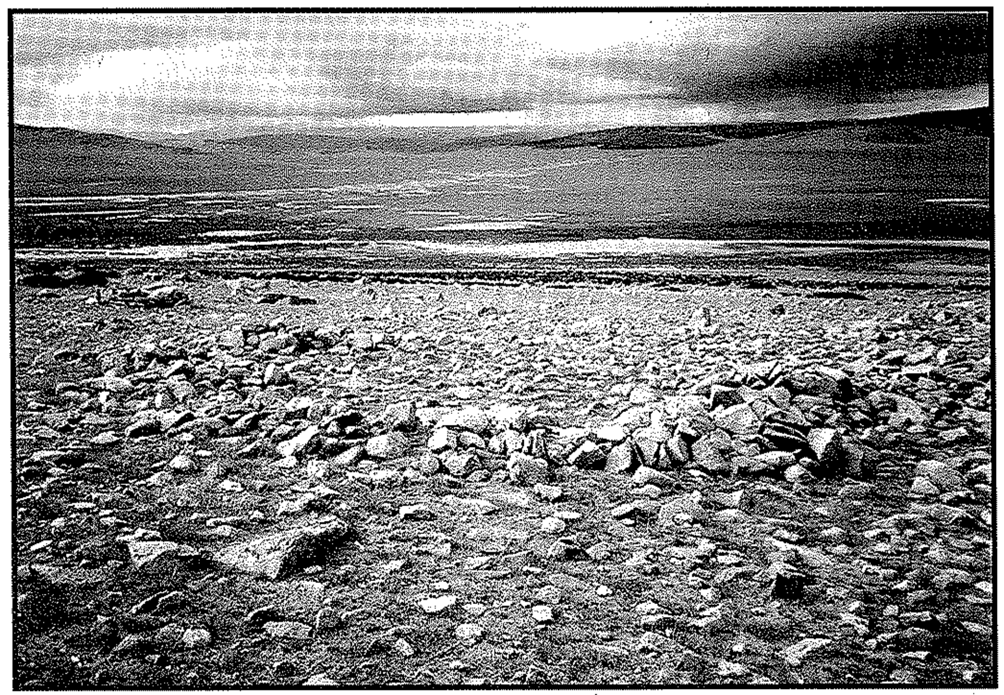
Vk : rDo ra sKya kyog. One of the structures.

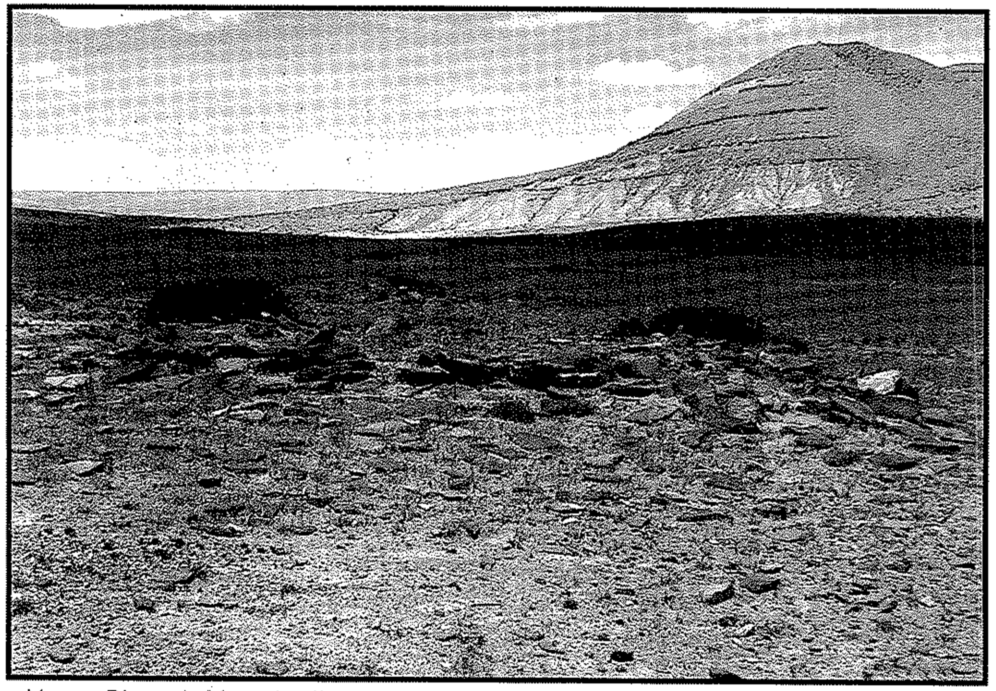




Vl : Dzab sa. One of the Mon *dur*.

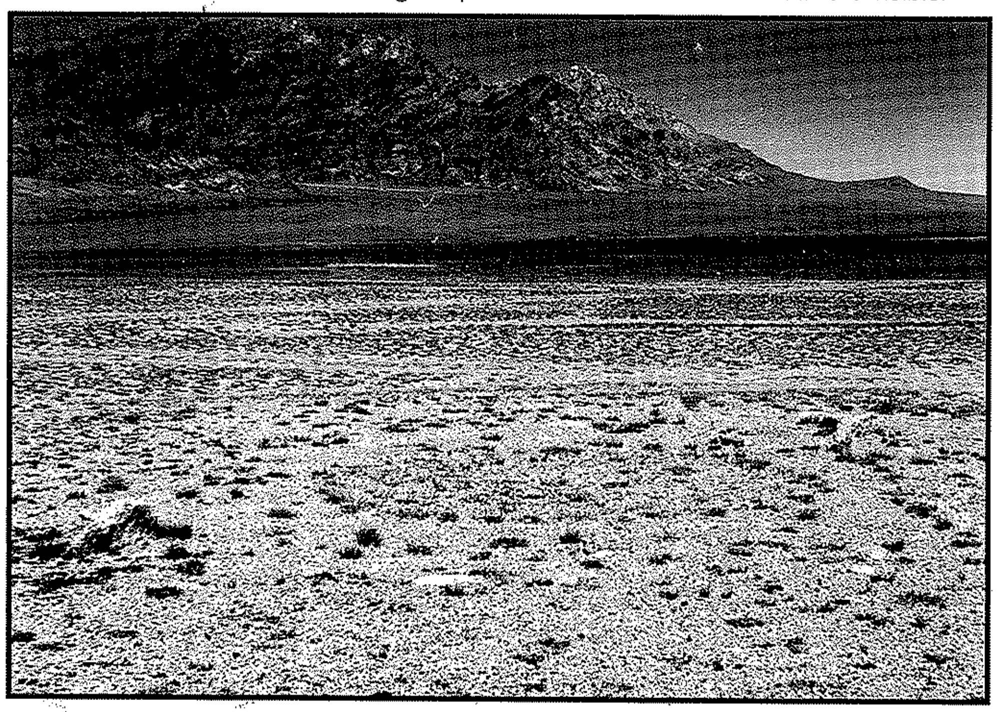
Vm : 'Dzog gdong Mon dur.

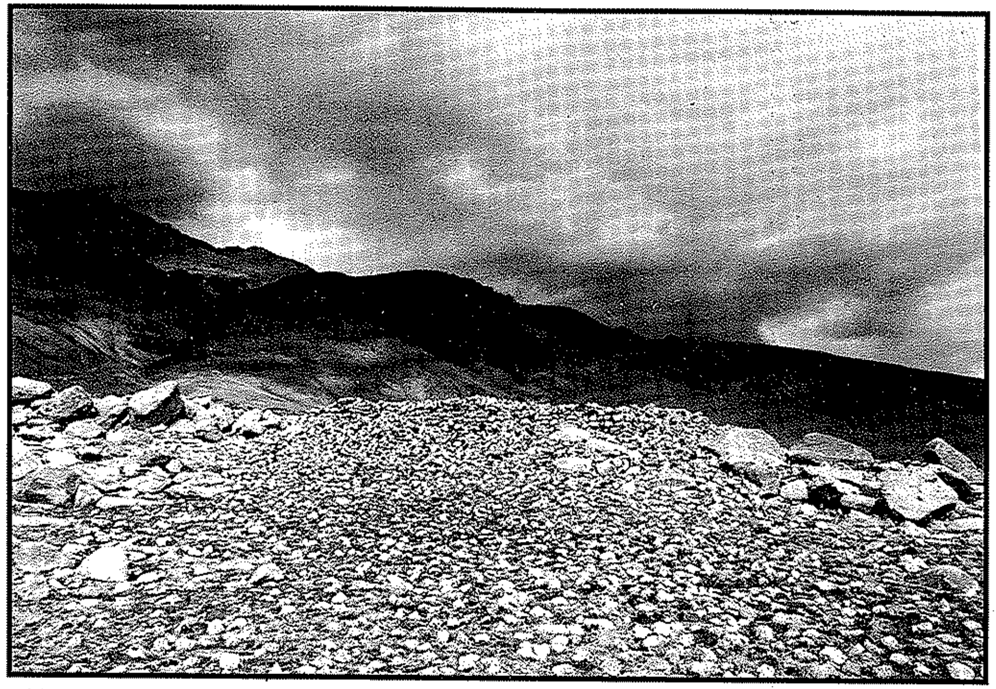




Vn : Ri rgyal. Mon *dur* II.

Vo : Shen chen. Stones forming the perimeter of one of the Mon *dur* are visible.





Vp : sMan lcam dKar mo. Large platform at Mon *dur* IV.

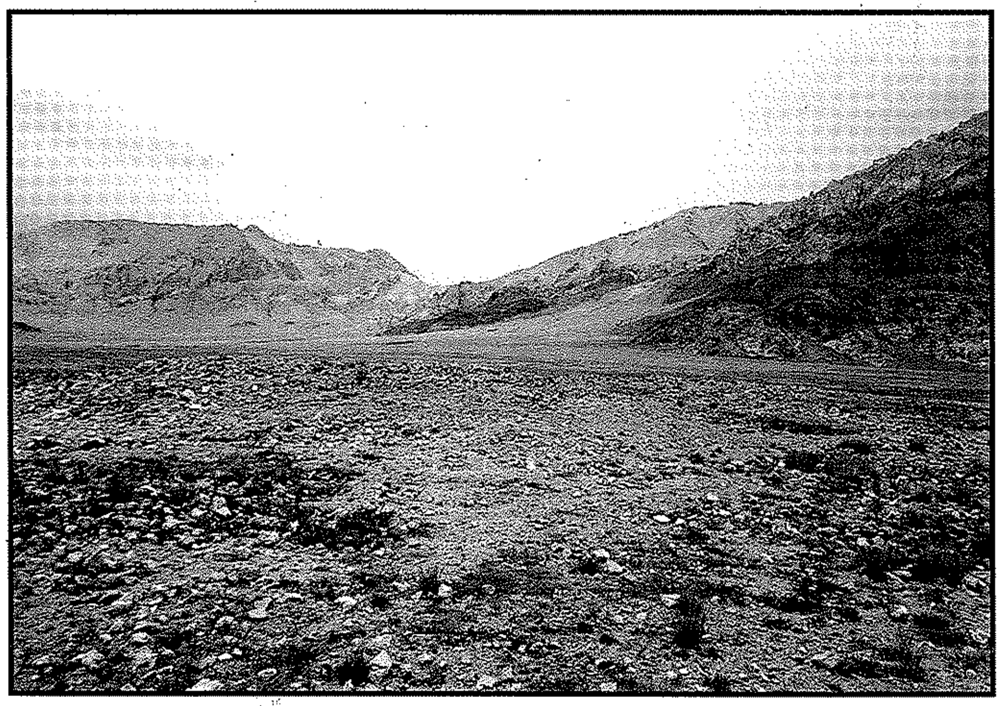
Vq : sGog ra. Largest Mon *ra*.

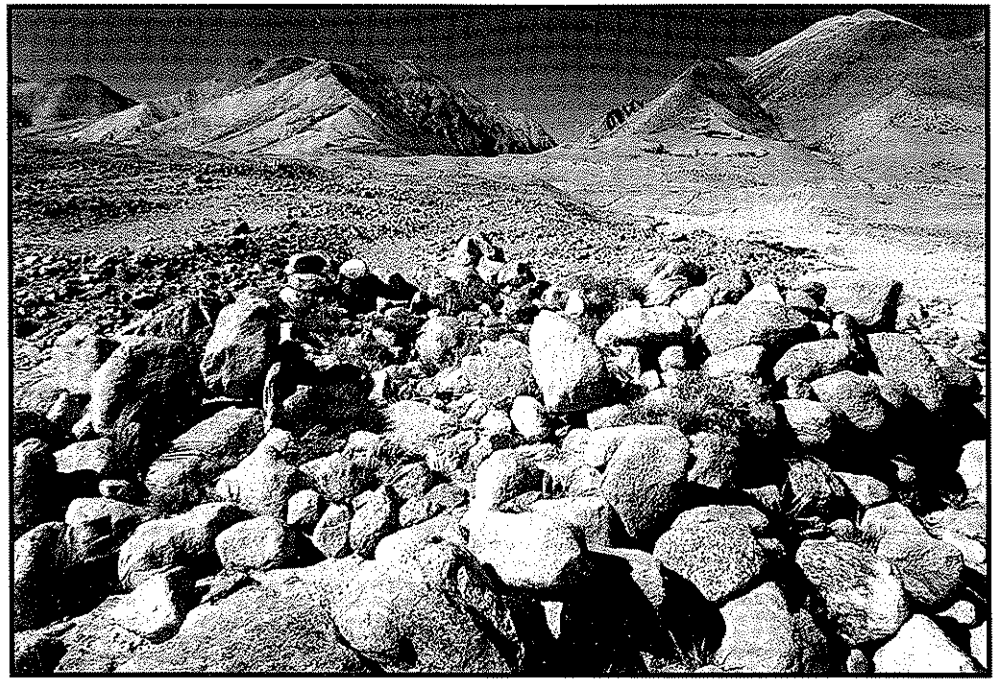




Vr : Brag lung Nub ma. Fragmentary Mon *dur.*

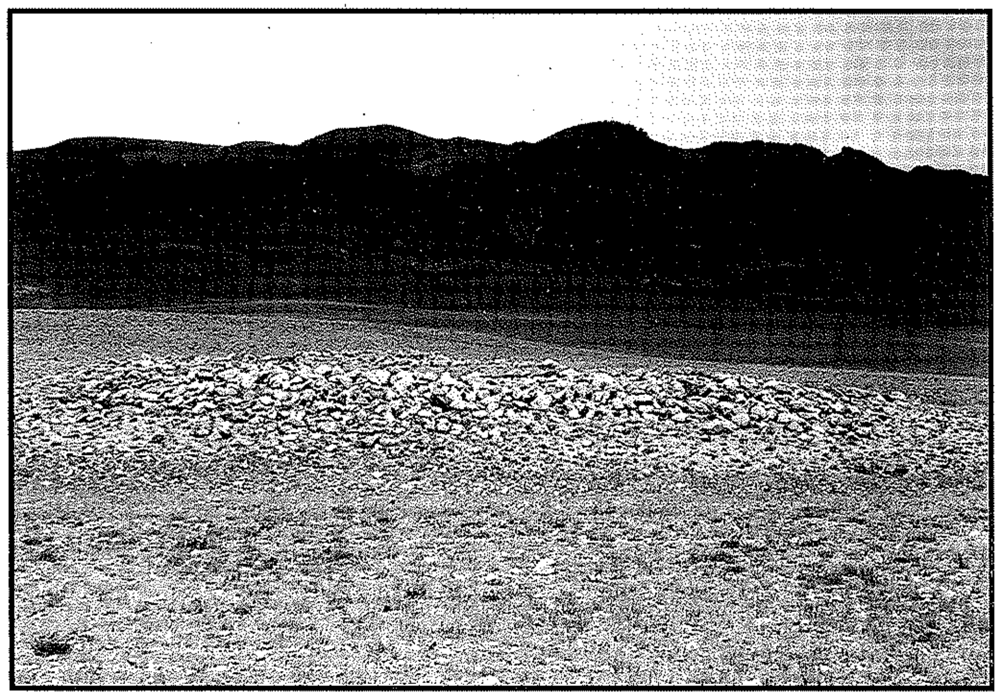
Vs : Chu mKhar Gyam. Unidentified foundations.





Vt : Thar Icang. A Mon *dur*.

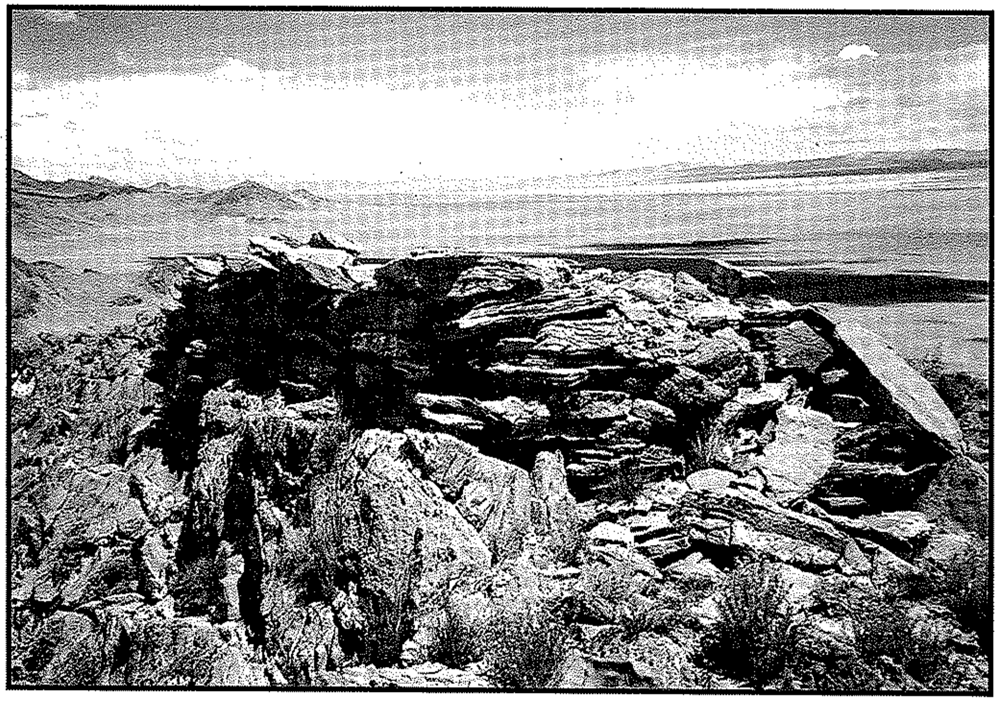
Vu : 'Or mo sgang Mon *dur*. Largest mound.





VIa : Ri rgyal. Northwest Mon *dur*.

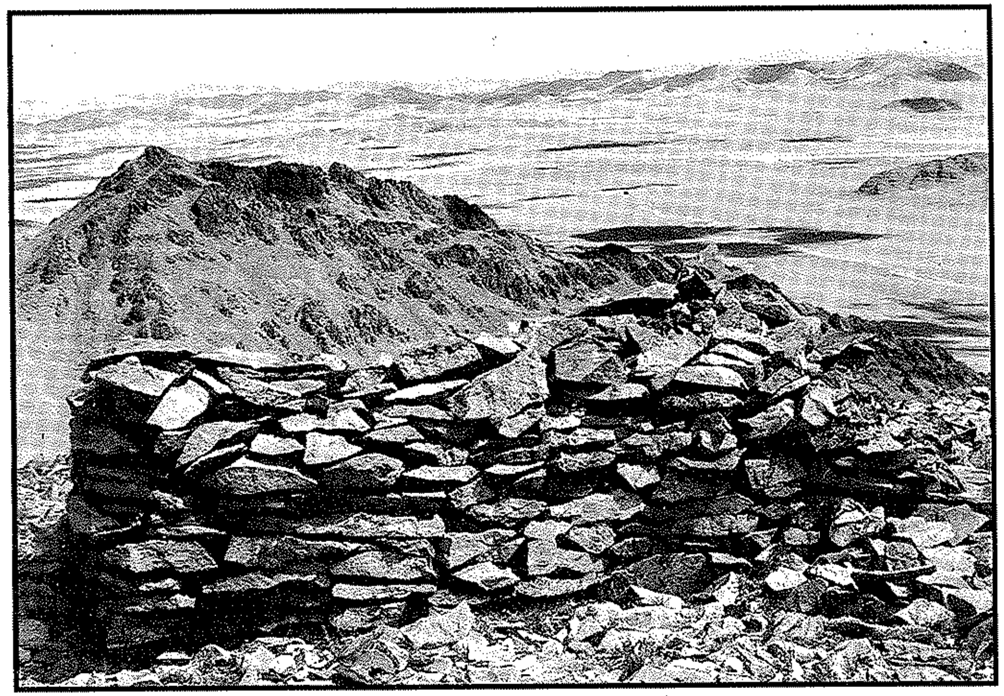
VIb : dGe lhas mGo dkar South. Mon *dur* on summit.





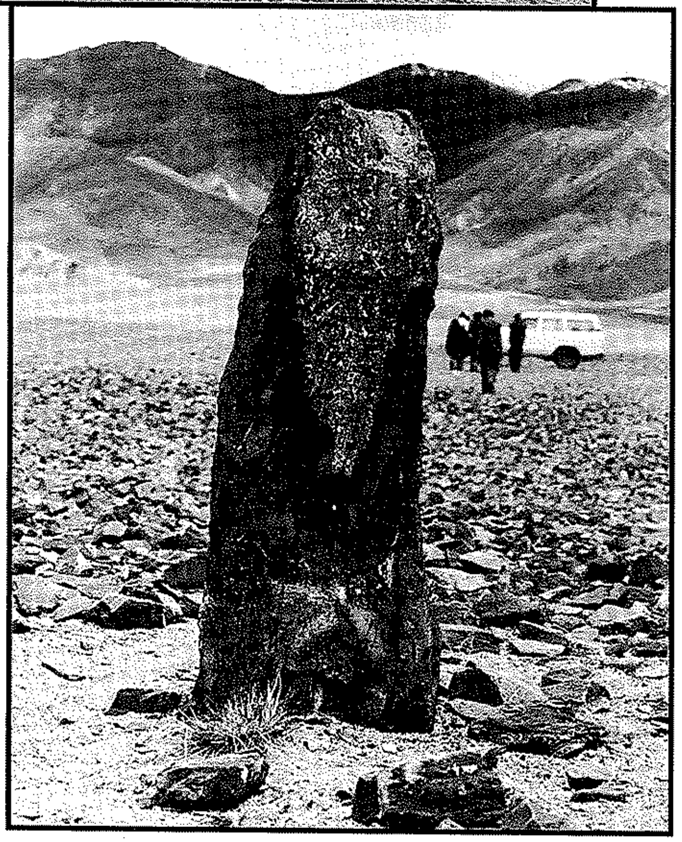
VIc : rTa nu. Mon *dur* I.

VId : Na ma lung. Mon *khang*.





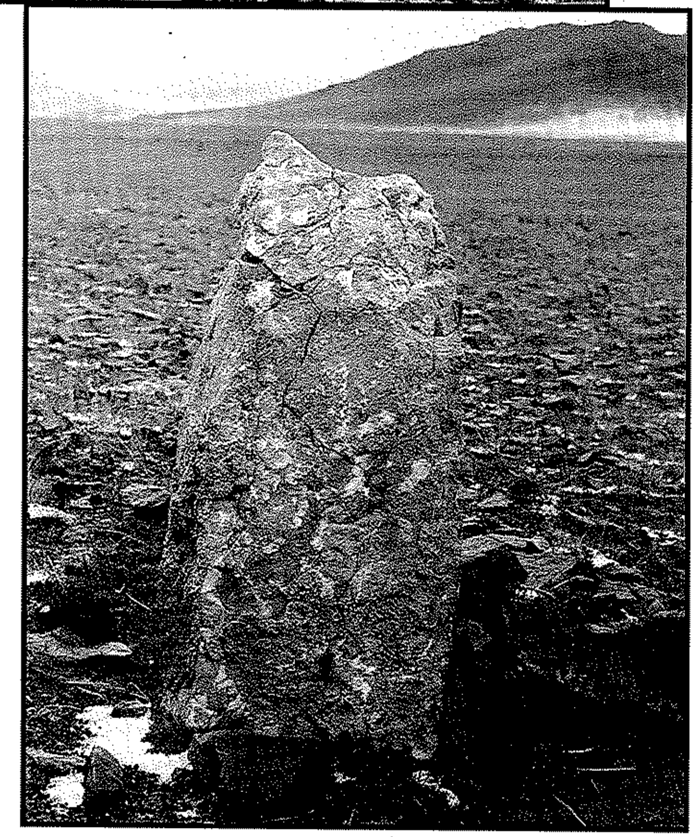
VIIa : rDo ring sPun gsum.



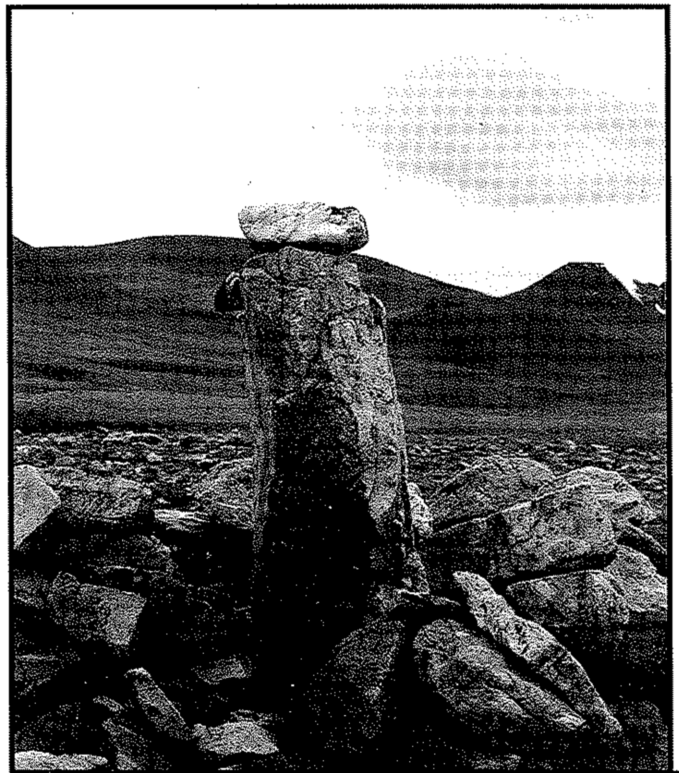
VIIb : rDo phur.



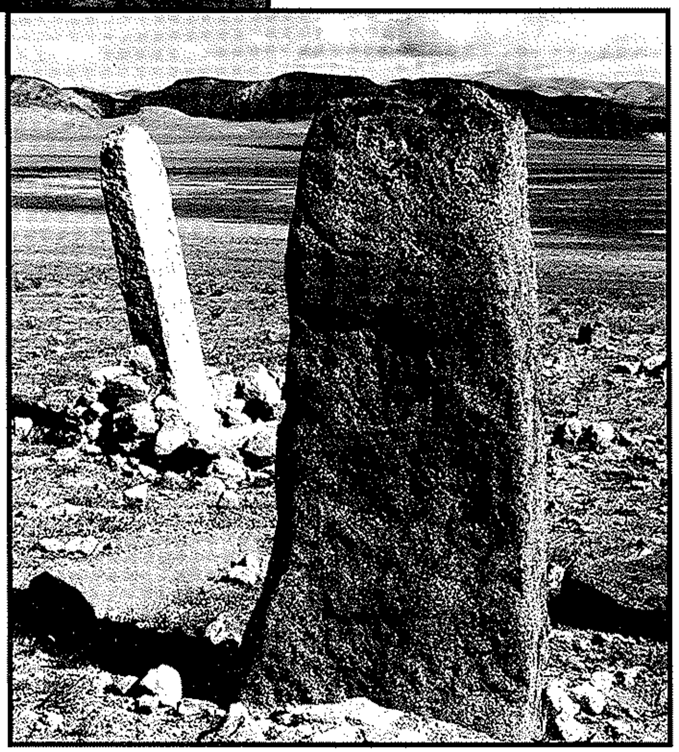
VIIc : Nag tshogs rDo ring.



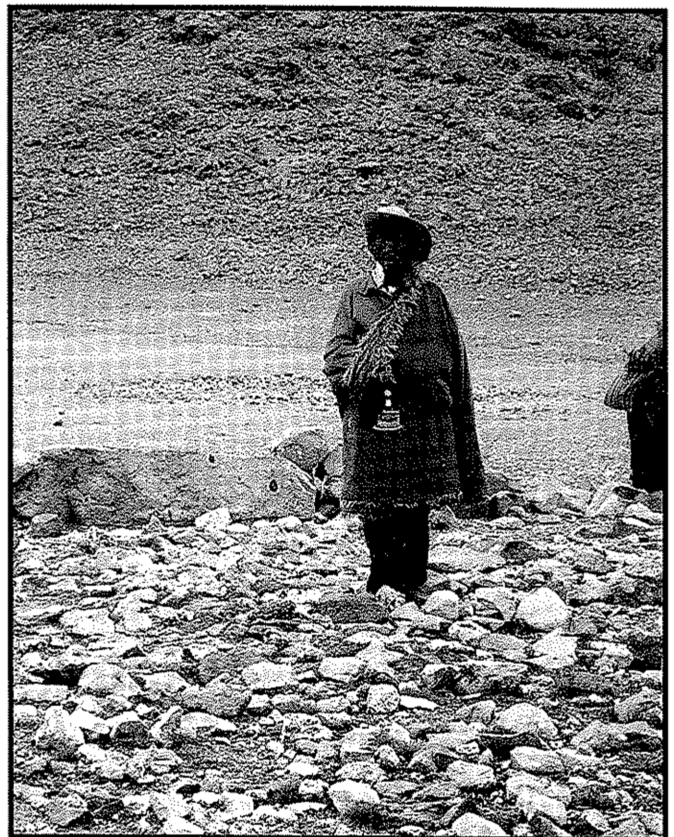
VIId : Srib ra rDo ring.



VIIIa : Ma g.yo rDo ring

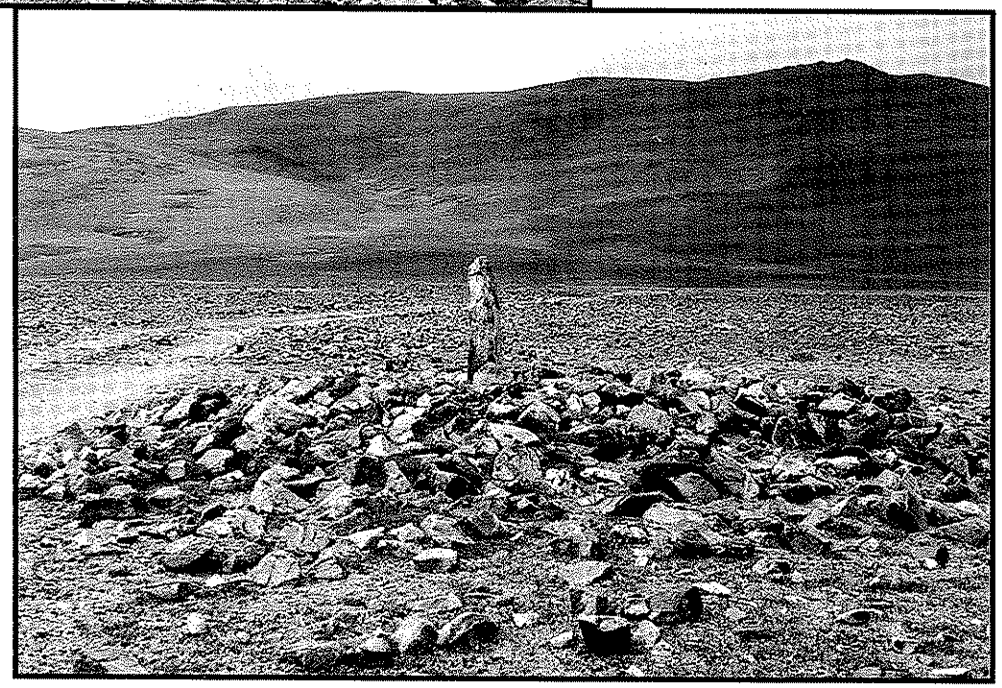


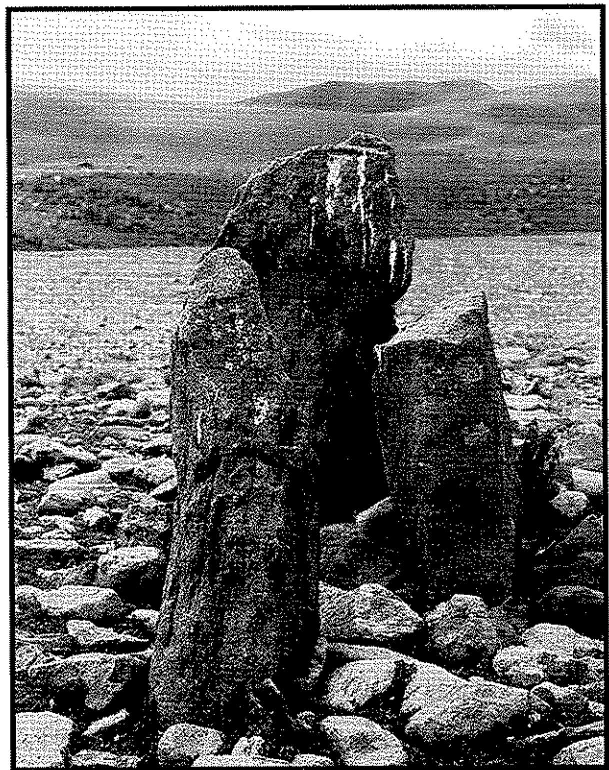
VIIIb : dPal mo rDo phur. South *rdo ring*.



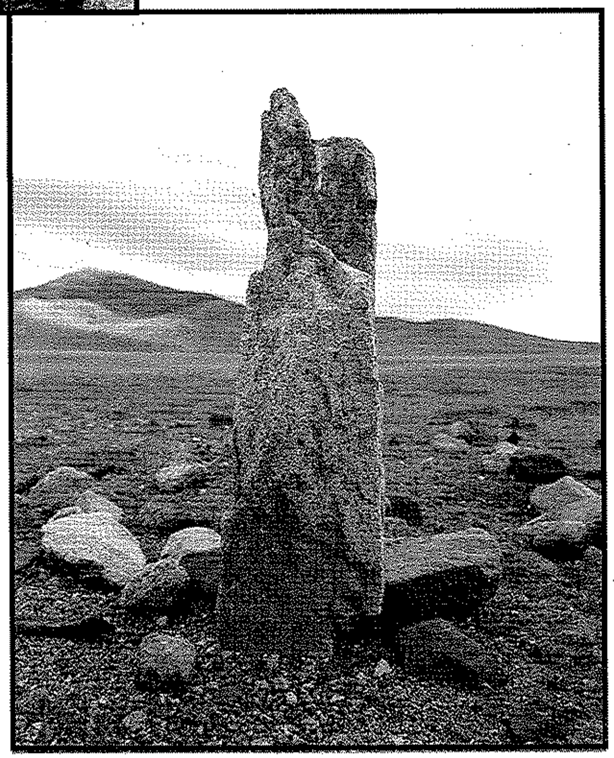
VIIIc : Tshar skam Byang ma rDo ring. The individual is standing where the pillar was erected. The fallen *rdo ring* is located behind him.

VIIId : Dung rtse rDo ring. South *rdo ring*.





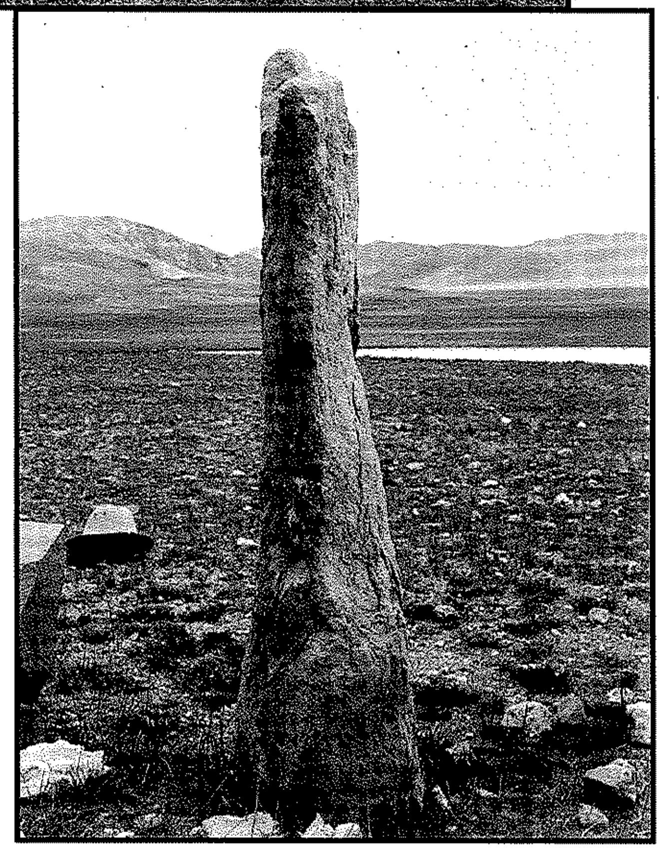
VIIIe : A chen rDo ring.



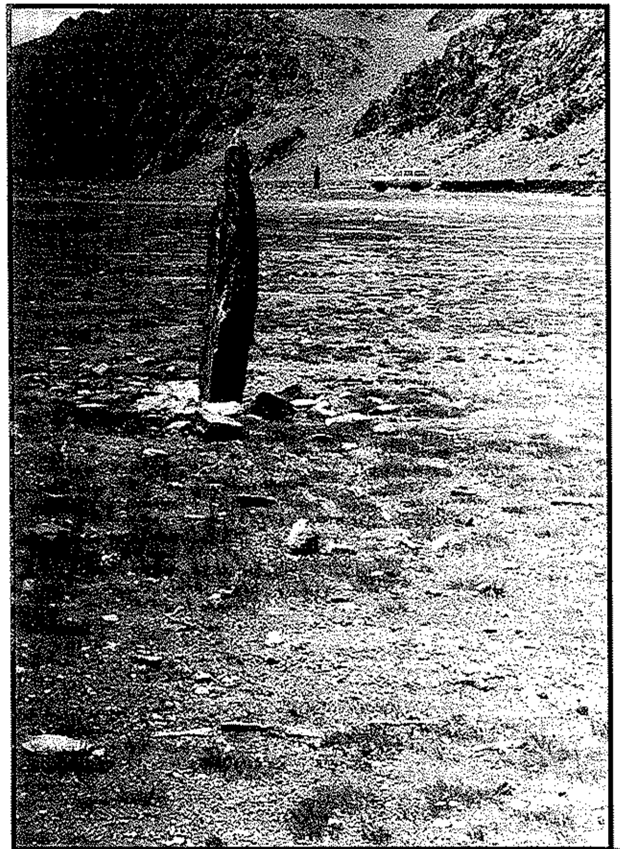
VIIIf : rNya shing rDo ring.



VIIIg : Ra ser khog rDo ring.

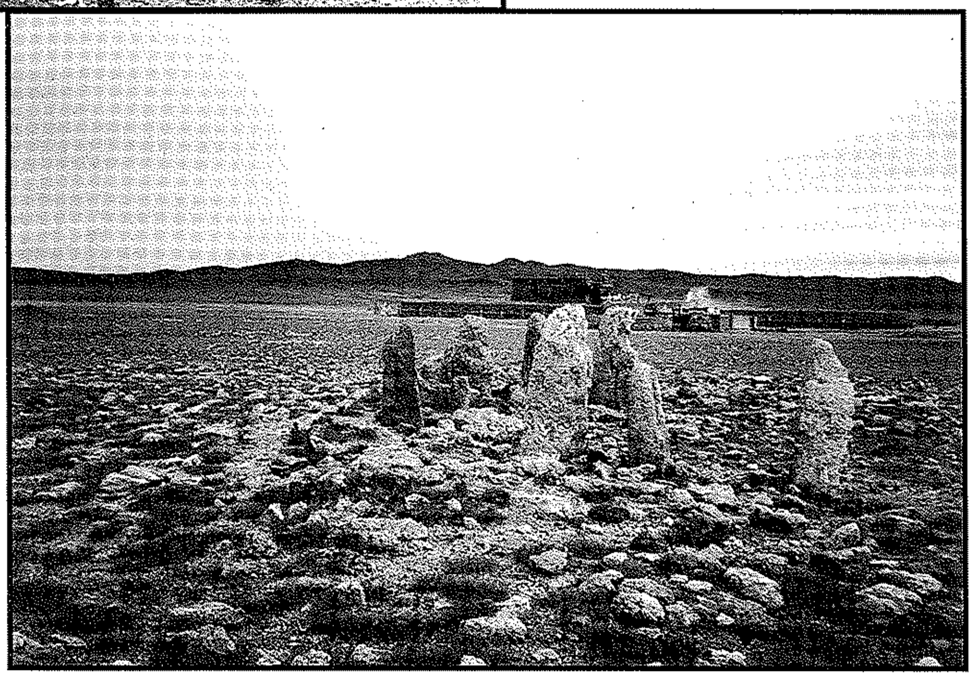


VIIIh : rDo ring dMar mo. The tallest specimen.



VIIIi : rDo ring lCags ra. The large pillar.

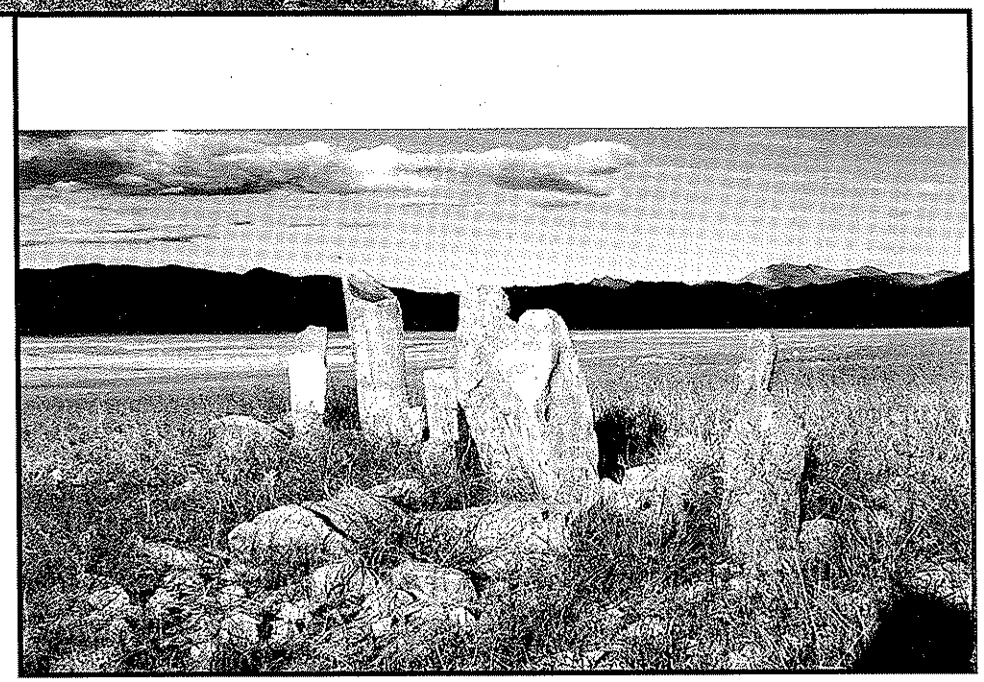
VIIIj : Sag the rDo ring.

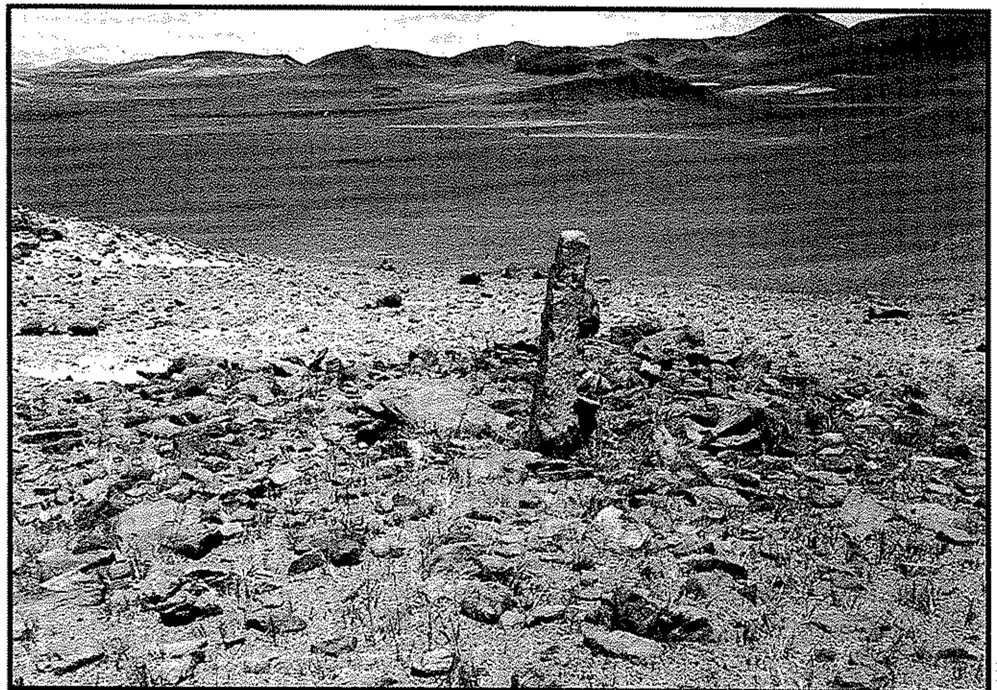




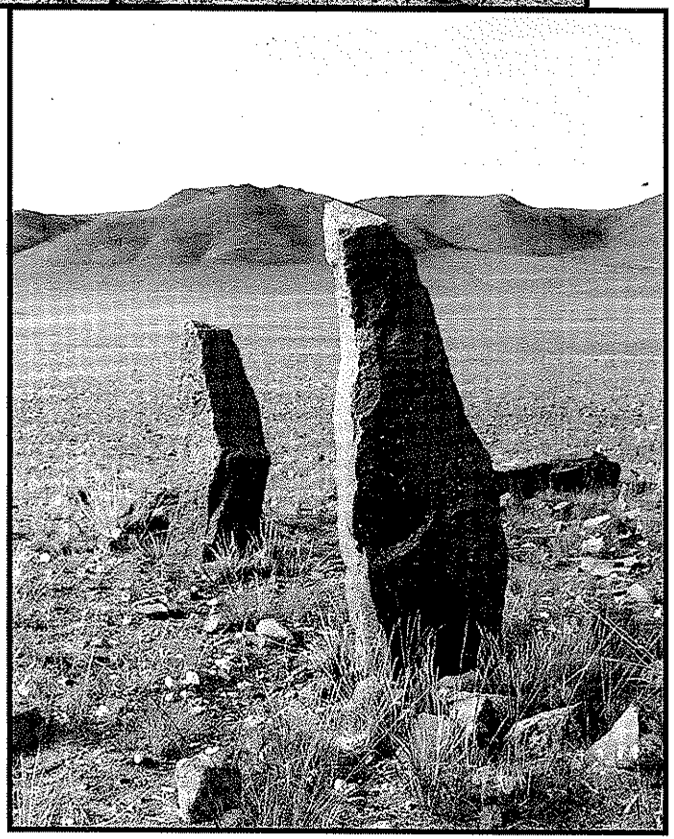
VIIIk : Na ma lung rDo ring. The sole standing specimen.

VIIIl : rDo ring dKar mo.





▲ VIIIm : Me 'bar rDo ring.

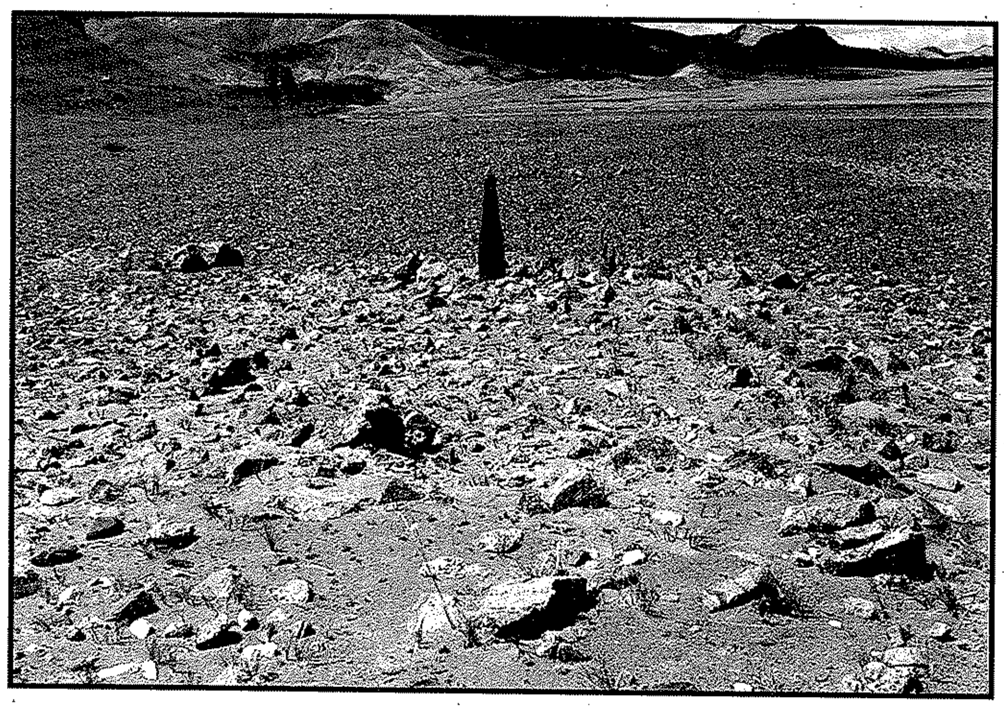


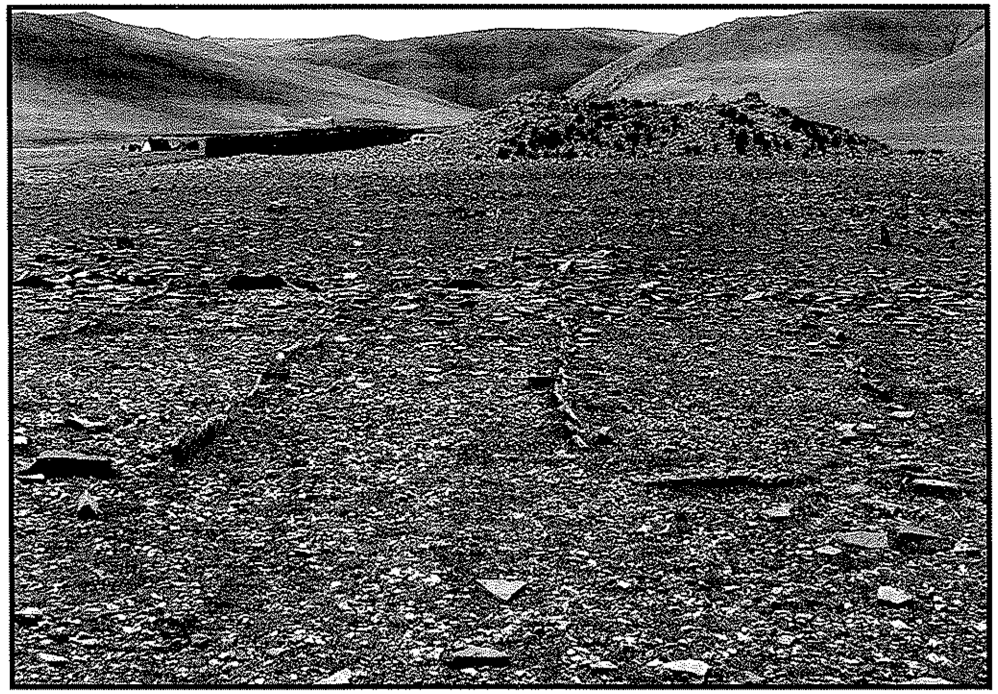
▶ VIIIn : sMon lam rDo ring.



VIIIo : Zhing lung rDo ring. East complex. Standing and uprooted pillars.

VIIIp : Khams chen rDo ring. Note the walls of the enclosure.





IXa : Gyang tshwa mdo Gyang ro. Note the broken pillars and wall footings in the foreground. What remains of the appended edifice is visible in the background.

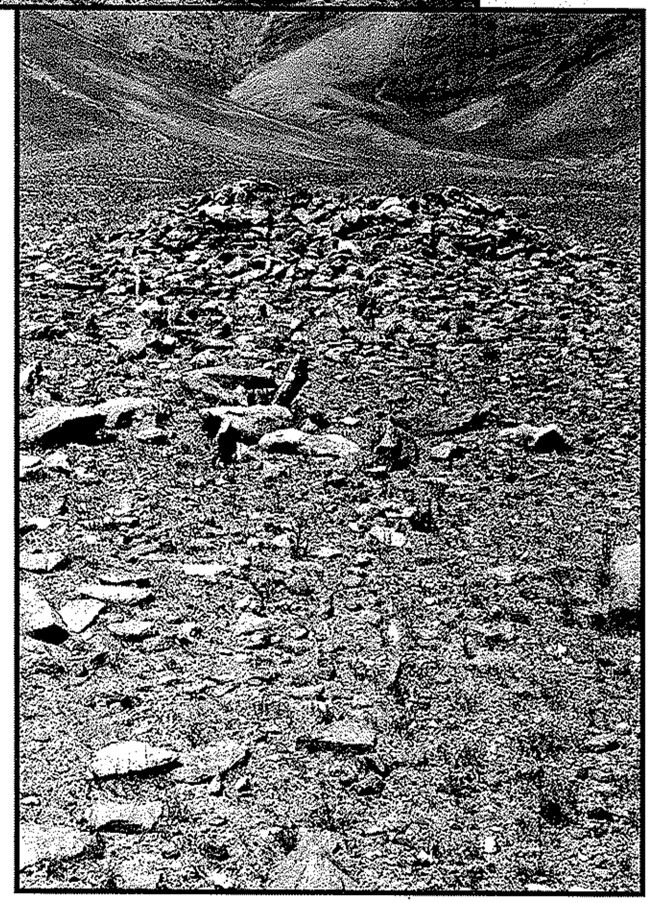
IXb : Gyang tshwa mdo Gyang ro. Modern herder's shed. The building technique mimics that of the old appended edifice, which was dismantled for the construction of such structures.





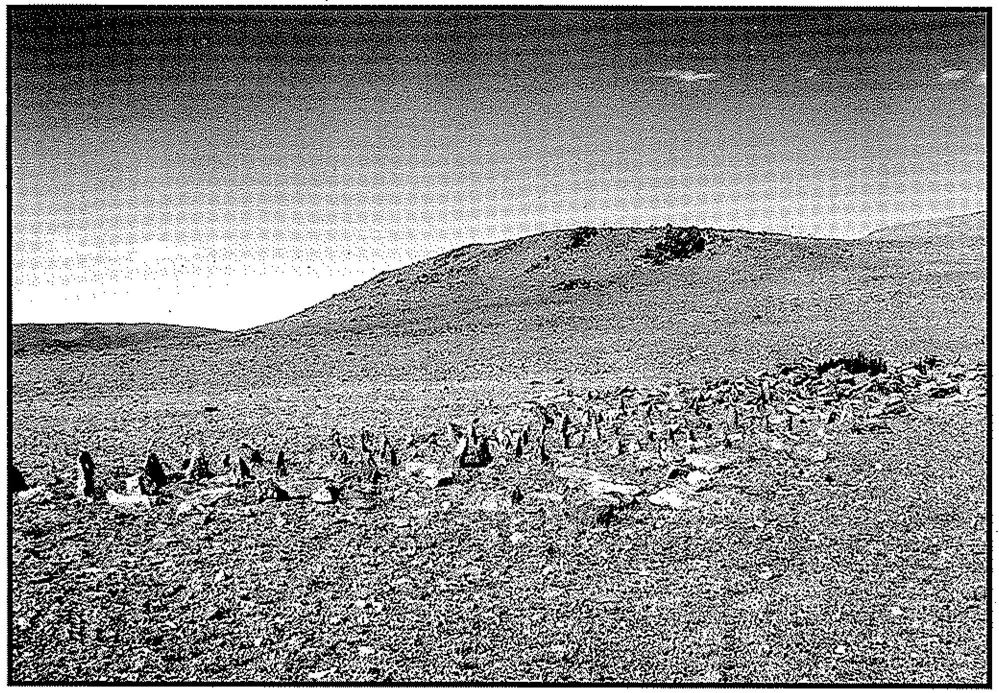
▲

IXc : Mon dur Lhas. Several pillars and the remains of the accompanying edifice are visible.



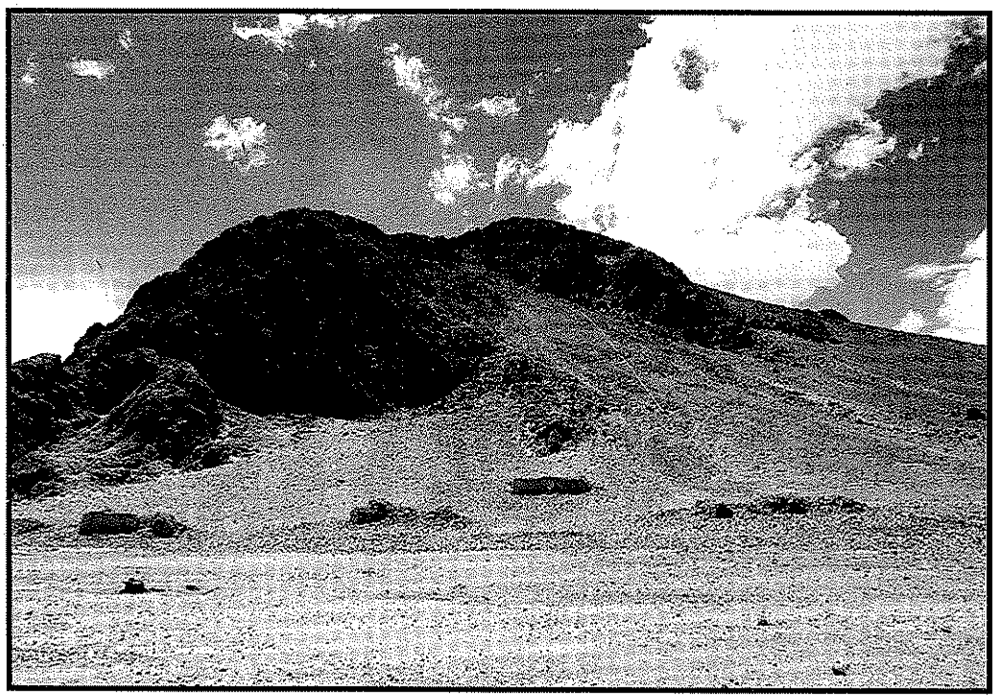
▶

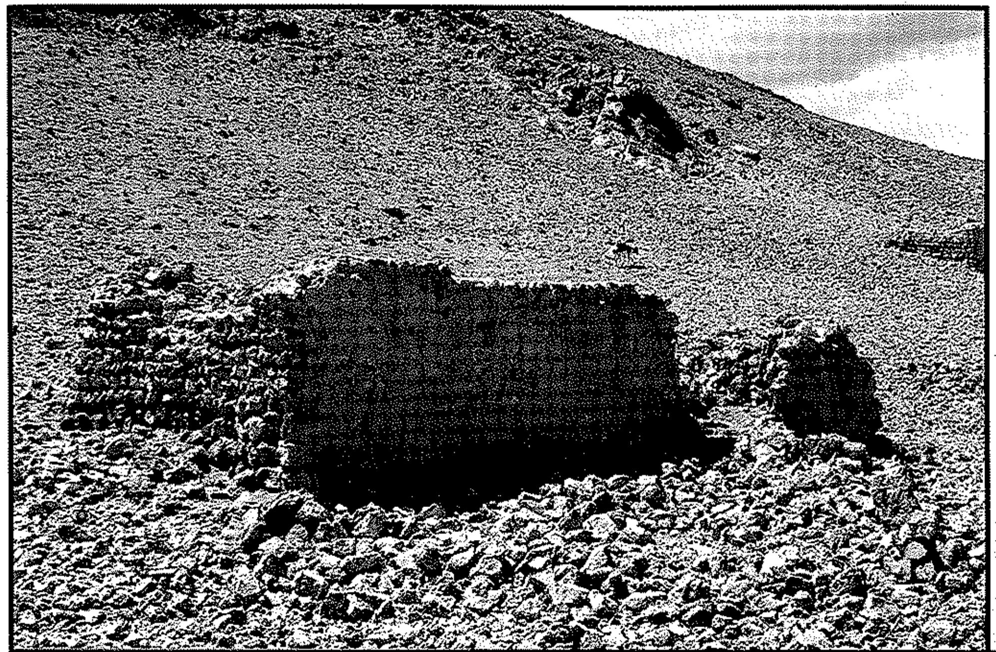
IXd : Sa mig Mon dur. Several pillars and the remains of the accompanying edifice are visible.



IXe : gNam gyi Ka ba. The appended edifice is visible behind the array of monoliths.

Xa : sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog.





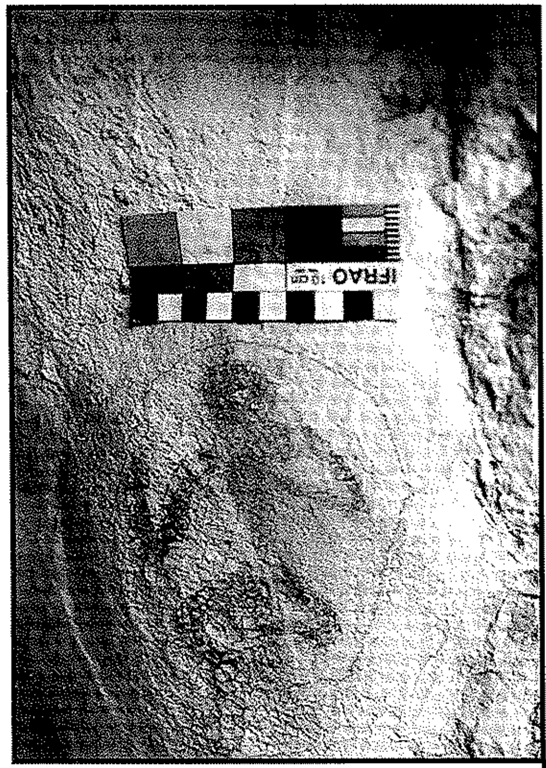
▲

Xb : sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog. Structure II.



▶

XI-1a : bKra shis Do Chen. Glang ma Phug. Three anthropomorphs and a deer.



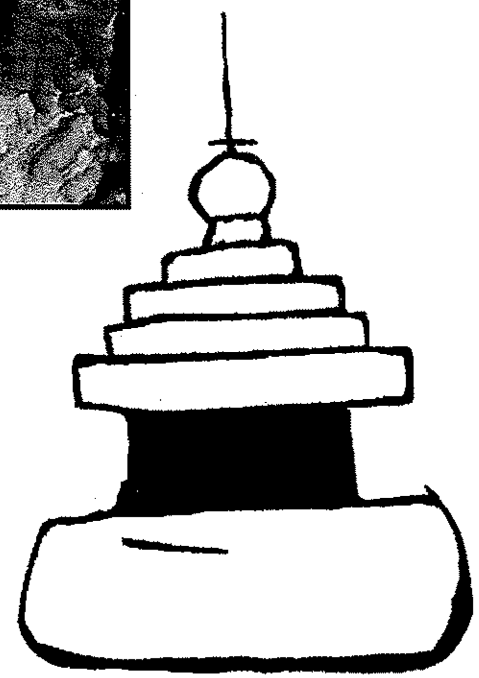
XI-2a : bKra shis Do Chen. Glang ma Phug. Religious figure.

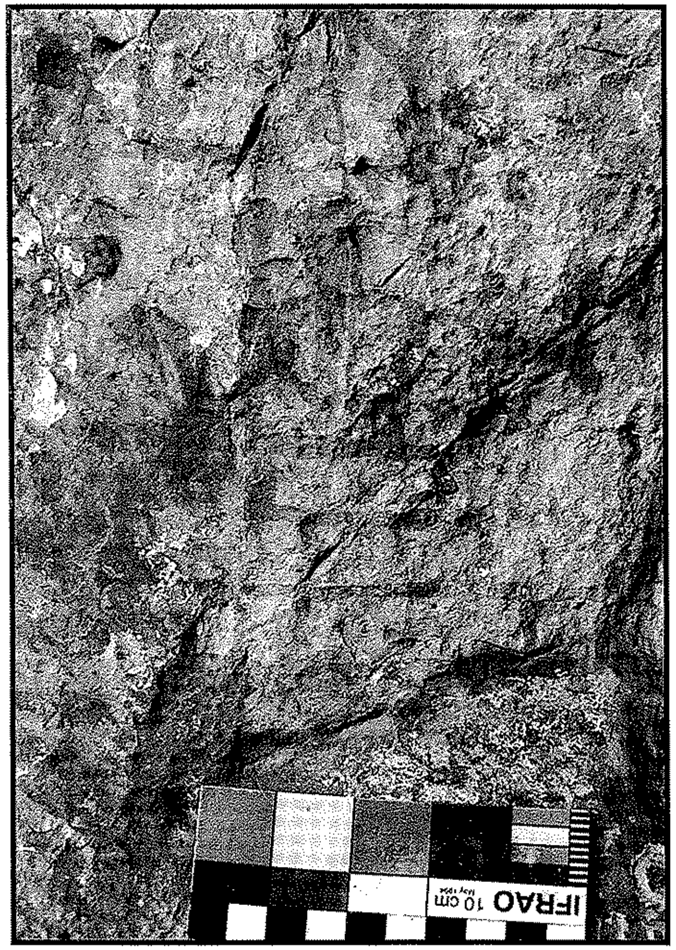


XI-3a : bKra shis Do Chen. Glang ma Phug. Ambulatory figure.



XI-4a : bKra shis Do Chung. bKra shis rtags brgyad Phug Archaic *mchod rten*.



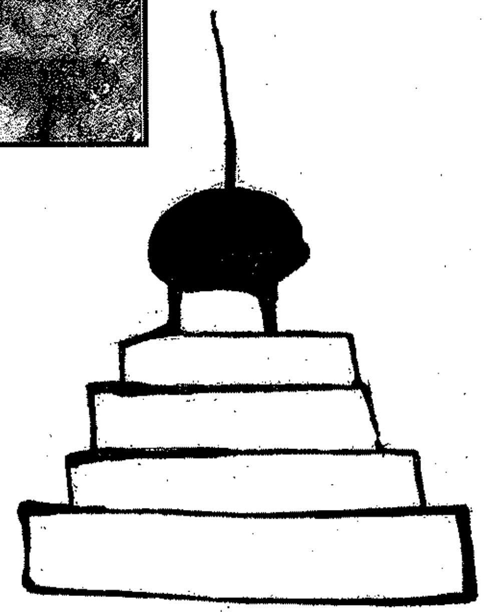


XI-5a : bKra shis Do Chung. bKra shis rtags brgyad Phug Archaic *mchod rten*.



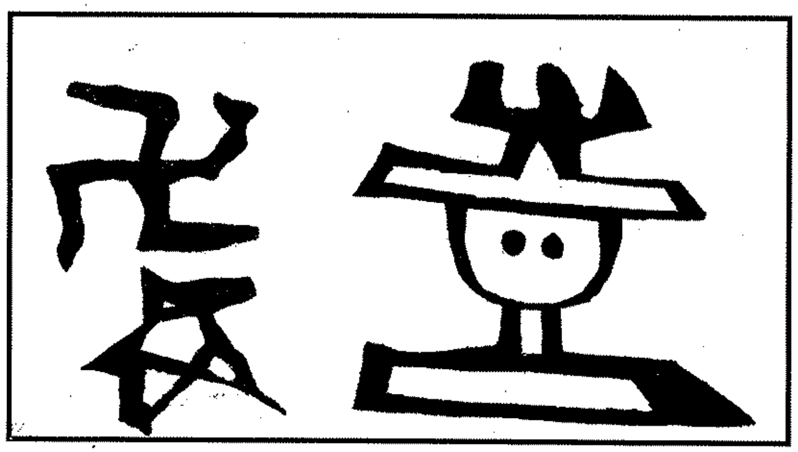


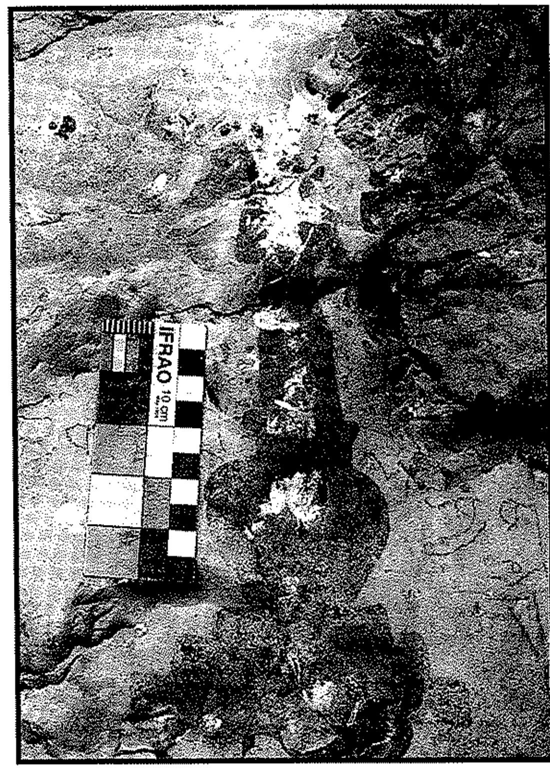
XI-6a : bKra shis Do Chung. bKra shis rtags brgyad Phug *mChod rten*-like depiction.





XI-7a : bKra shis Do Chung. bKra shis rtags brgyad Phug *mChod rten*-like depiction.





◀ XI-8a : bKra shis Do Chen. sTag lung Phug. Buddhist *mchod rten*.

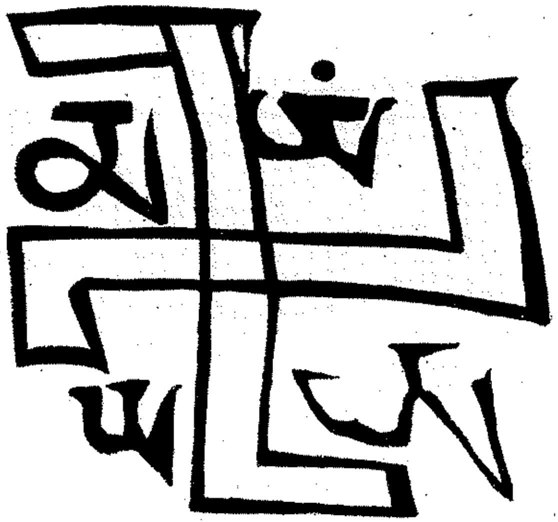


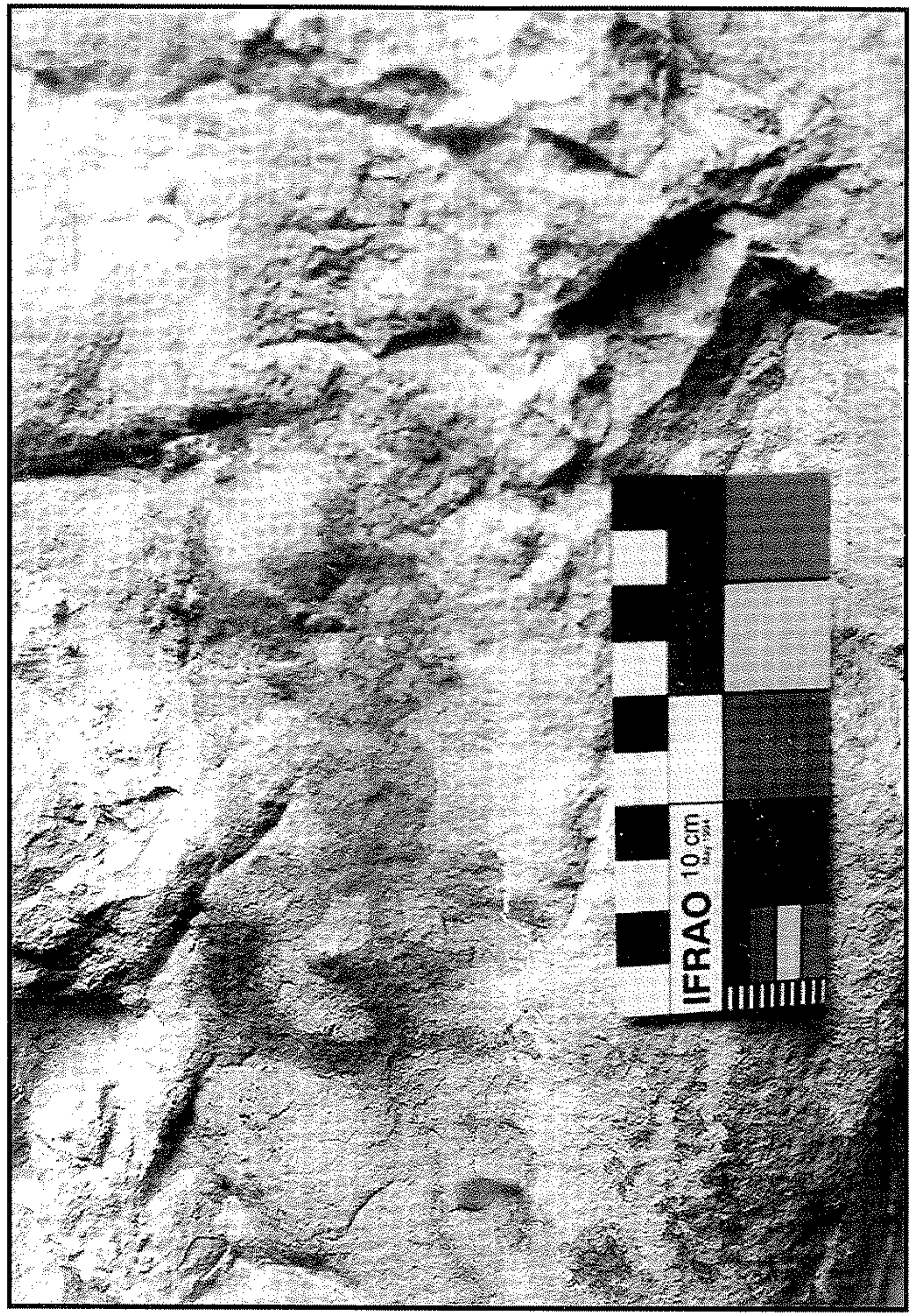
▶ XI-9a : bKra shis Do Chen. sTag lung Phug. Buddhist *mchod rten*.



◀

XI-10a : bKra shis Do Chen.
sTag lung Phug.
g.Yung drung and
inscription.





XI-11a : bKra shis Do Chung. 'Jam dbyangs Phug. *rDo rje.*



◀ XI-12a : bKra shis Do Chung. rDo zhun Phug. Pictograph resembling *mchod rten* or *bum pa*.

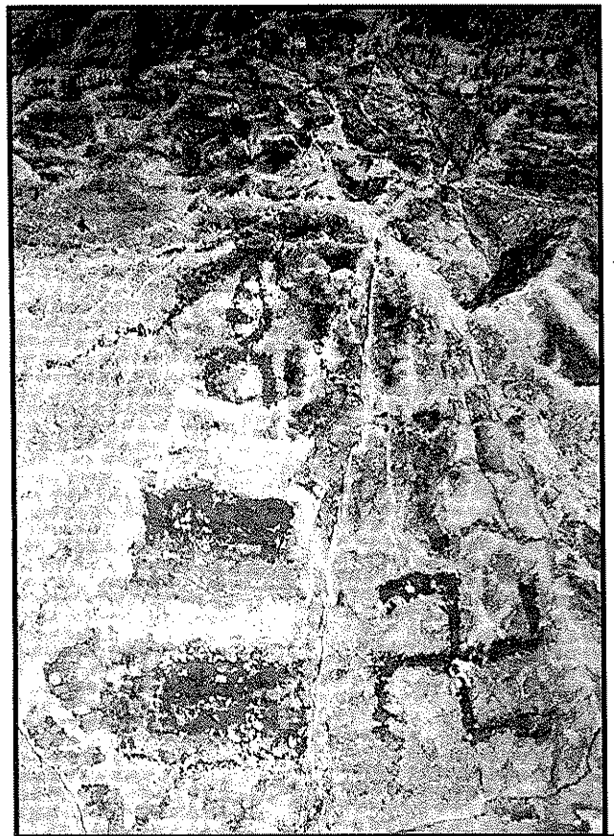




◀ XI-13a : bKra shis Do Chung. Pad sdong Phug. *Nor bu me 'bar*.

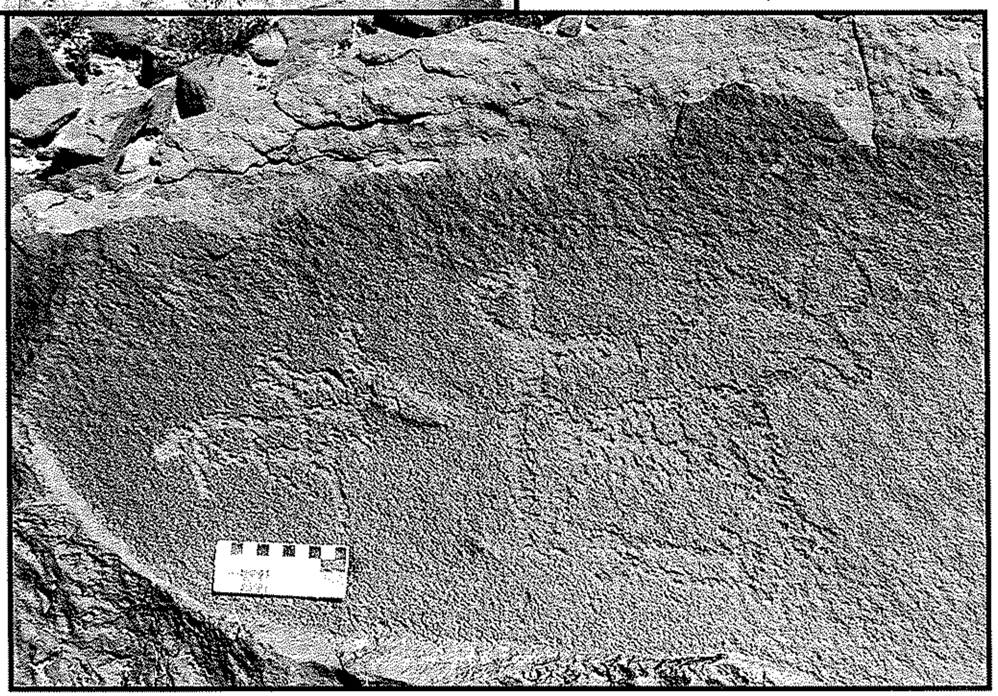
XI-14a : bKra shis Do Chung. dBu ma Phug. *g.Yung drung* and inscription. ▼

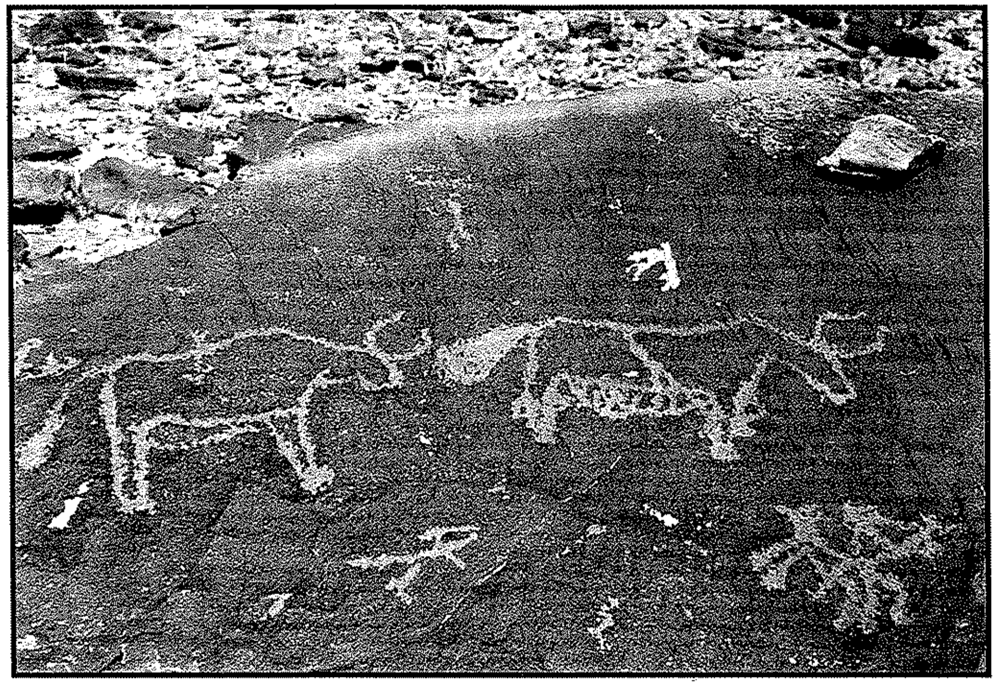




◀ XI-1b : *mChod rten* and *g.yung drung*.

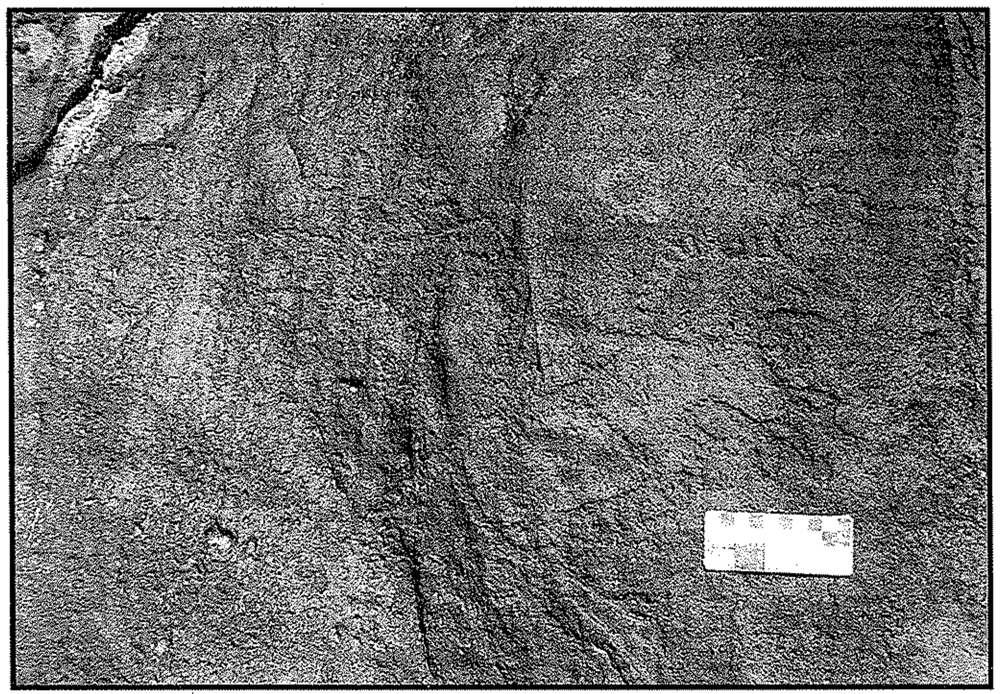
XI-1c : *'Brong* hunting. ▼





XI-2c : *'Brong* hunting.

XI-3c : *'Brong* hunting.





XI-4c : *'Brong* hunting.

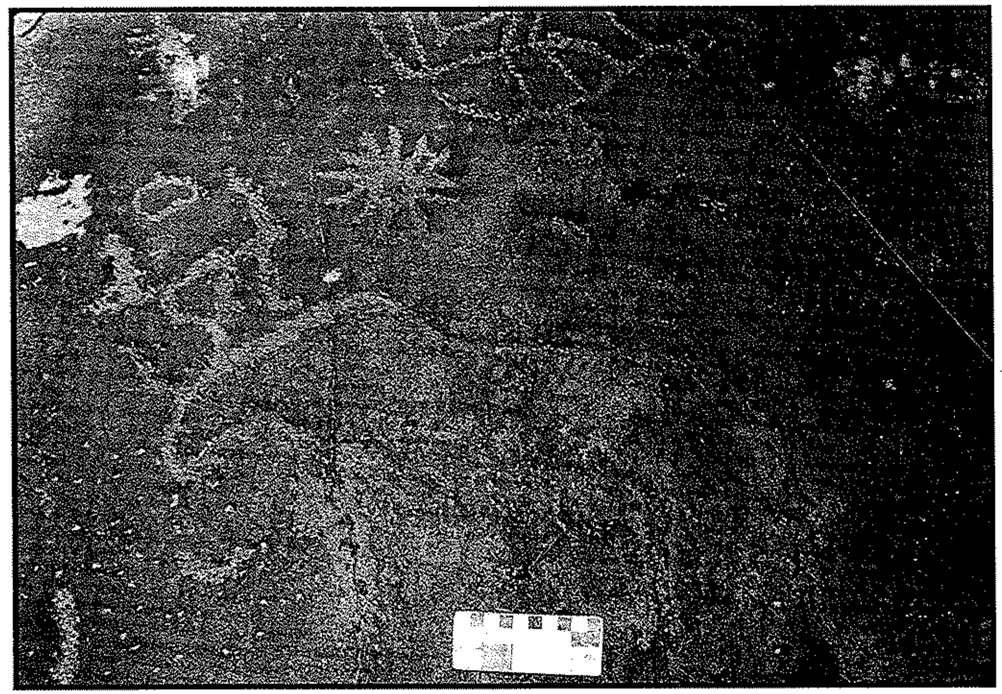
XI-5c : *'Brong*.

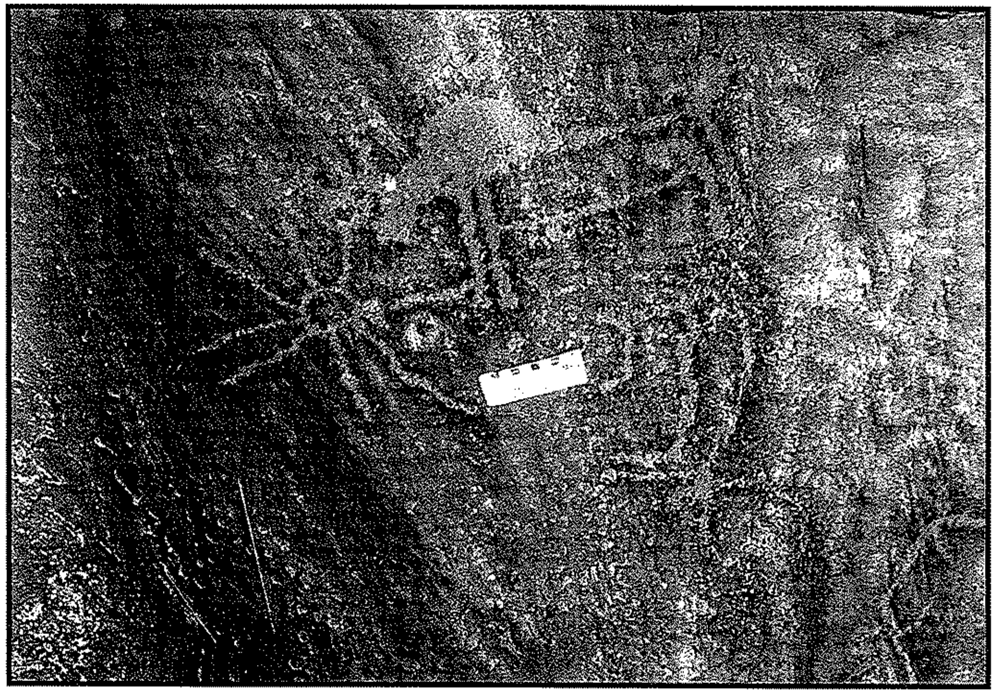




XI-6c : *'Brong*.

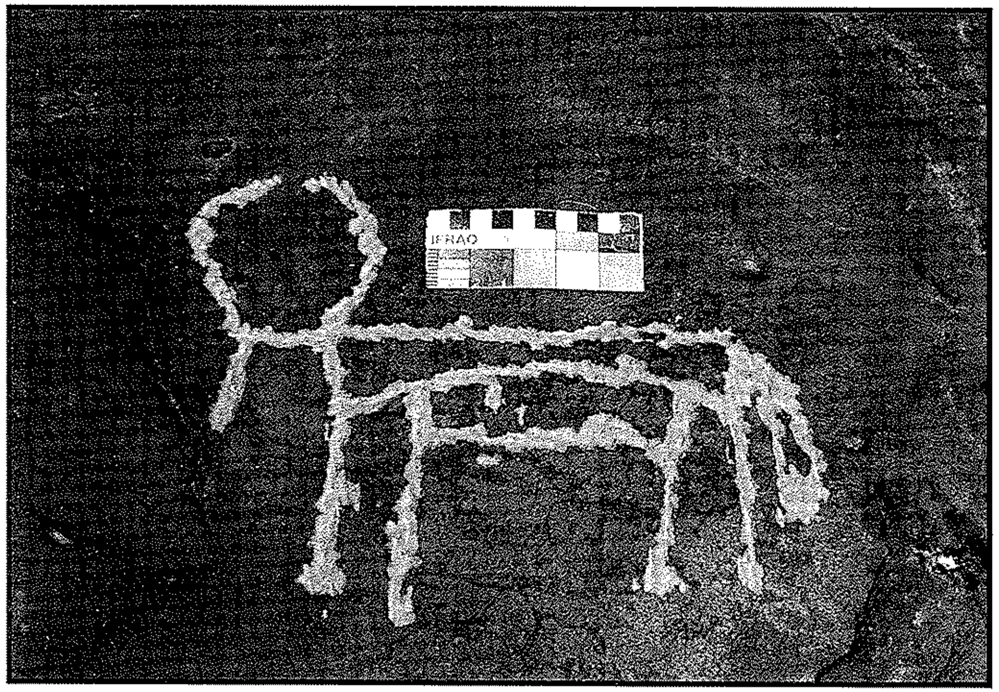
XI-7c : *'Brong*, sun and moon.

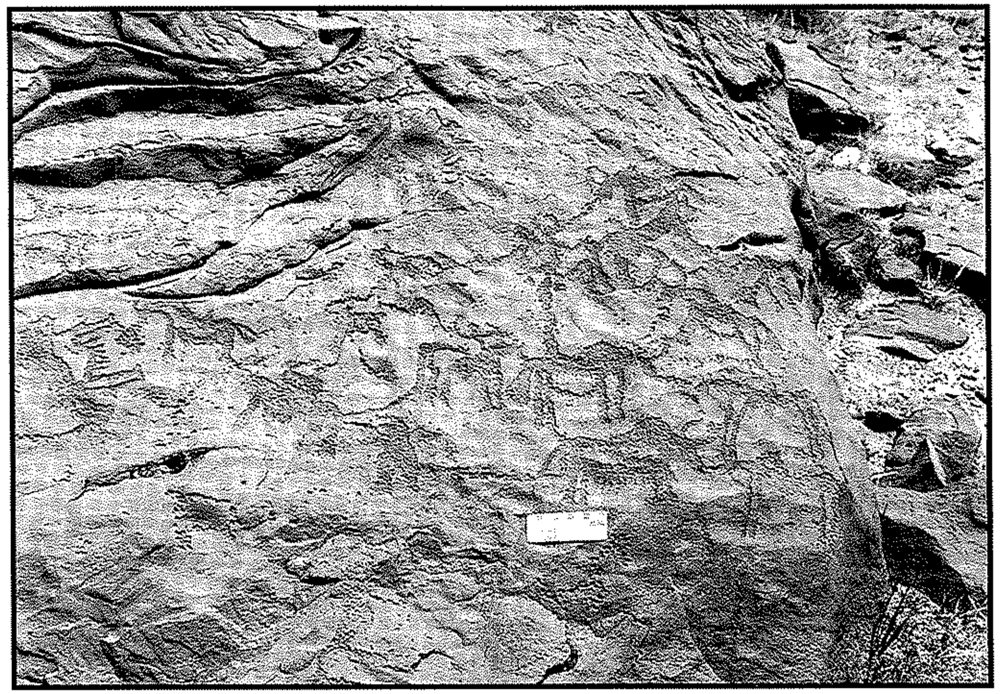




XI-8c : Two *'brong* and sun.

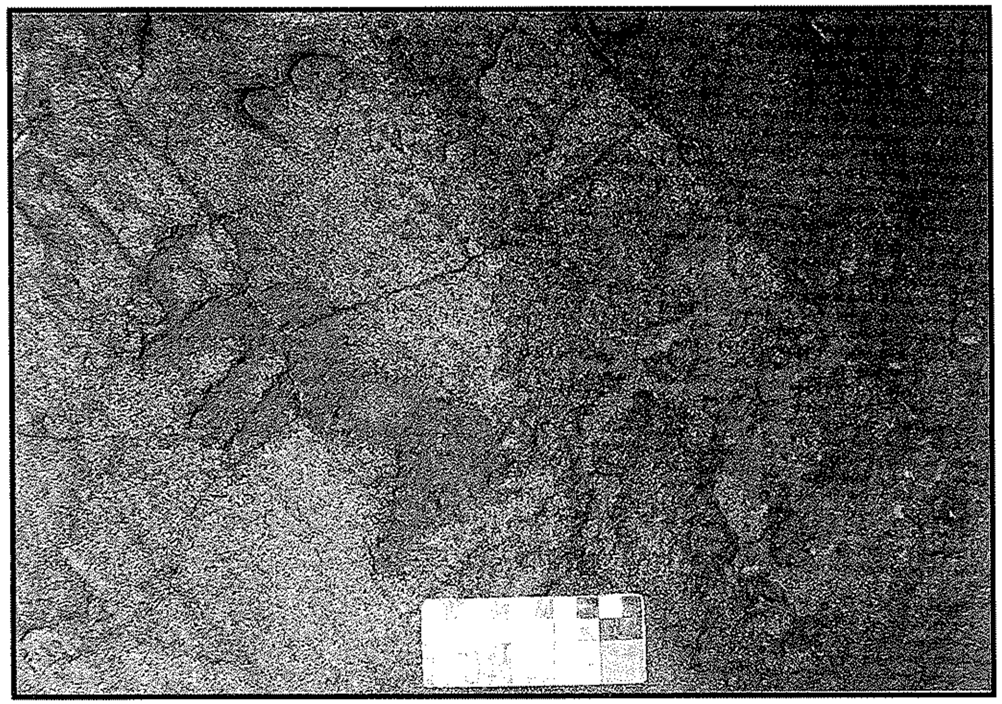
XI-9c : More modern carving of a yak.

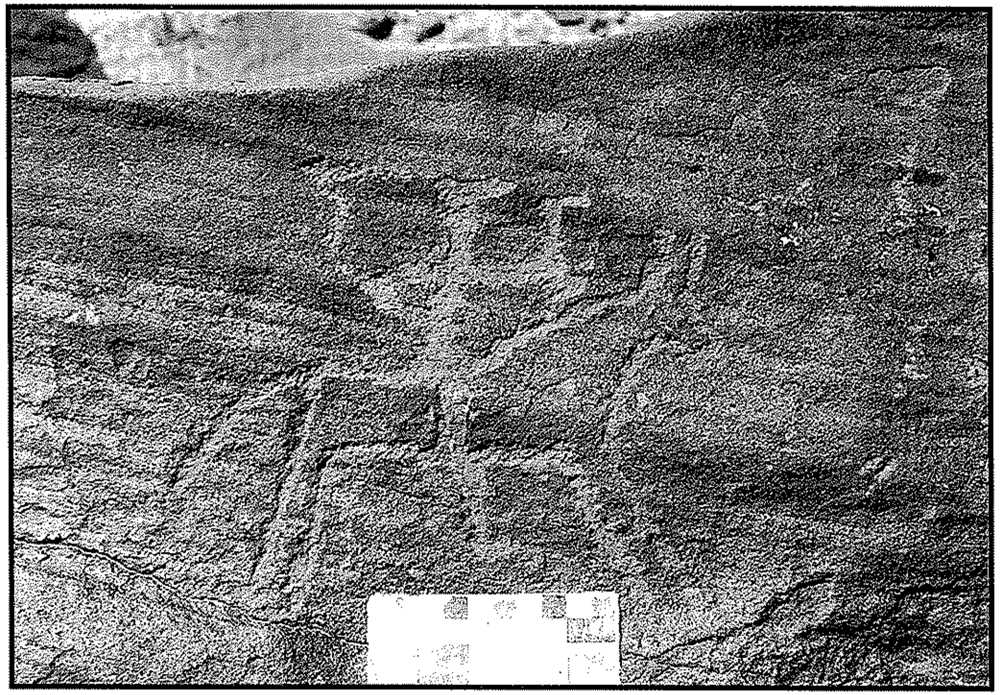




XI-10c : Large hunting scene.

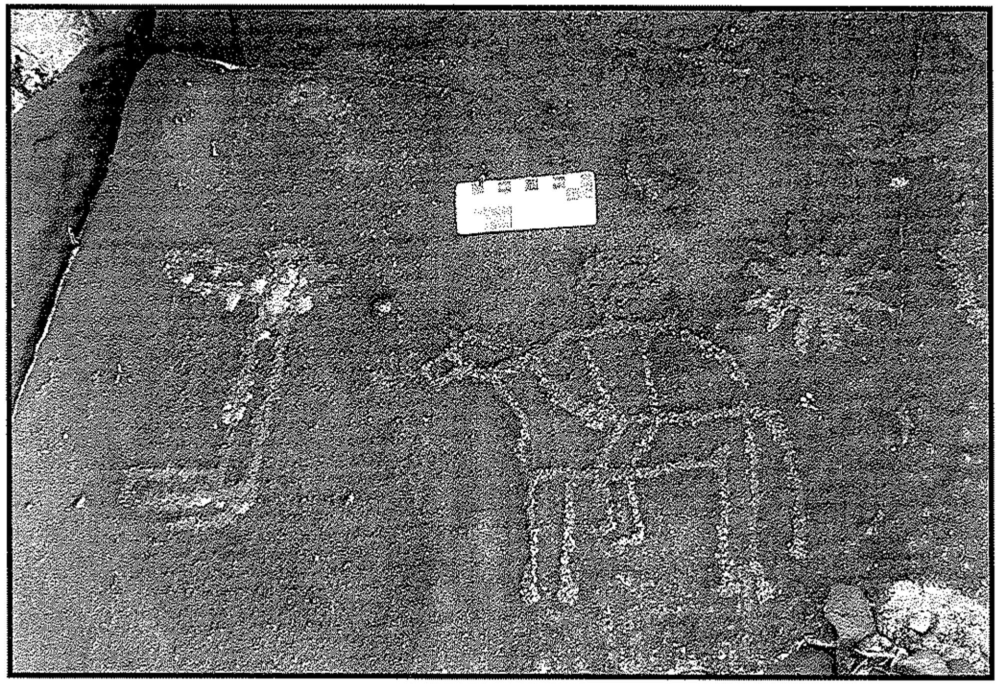
XI-11c : *'Brong* hunter.

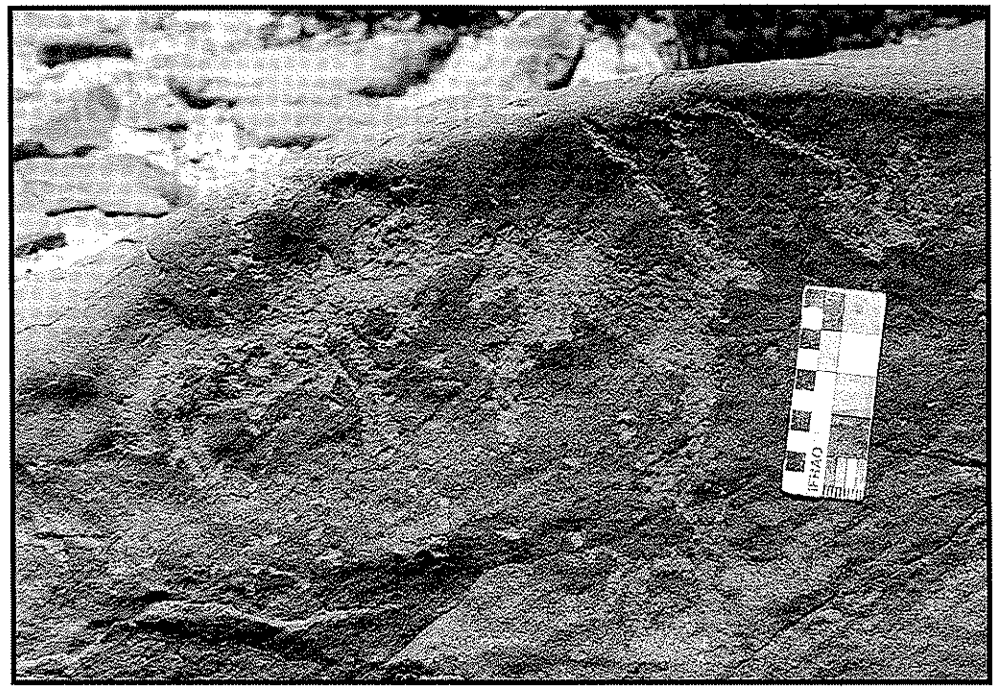




XI-12c : Horseman.

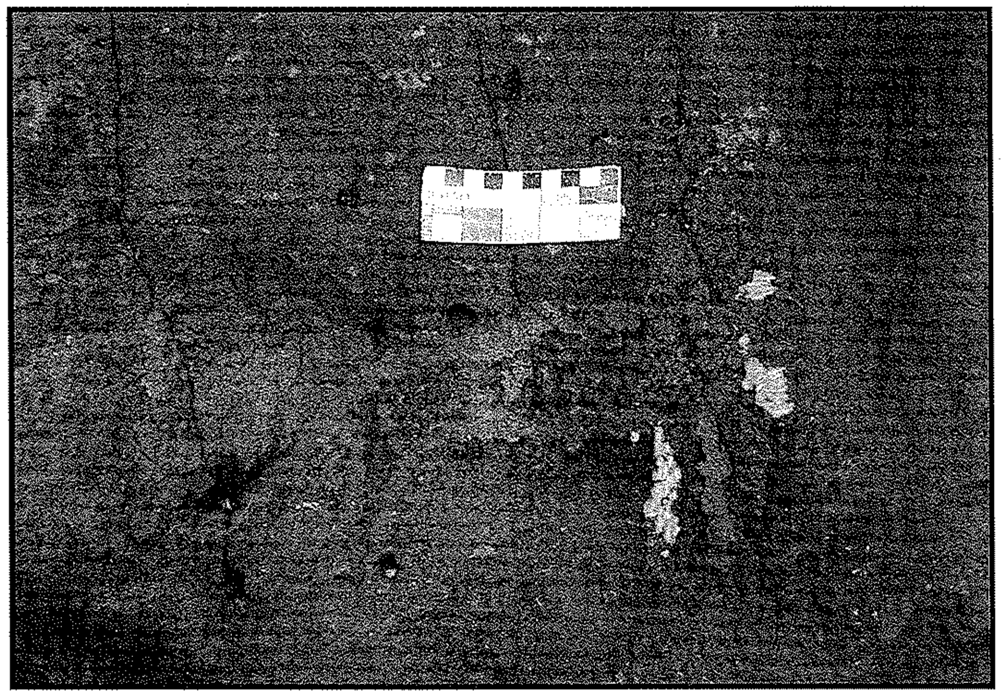
XI-13c : Horseman, sun and moon.

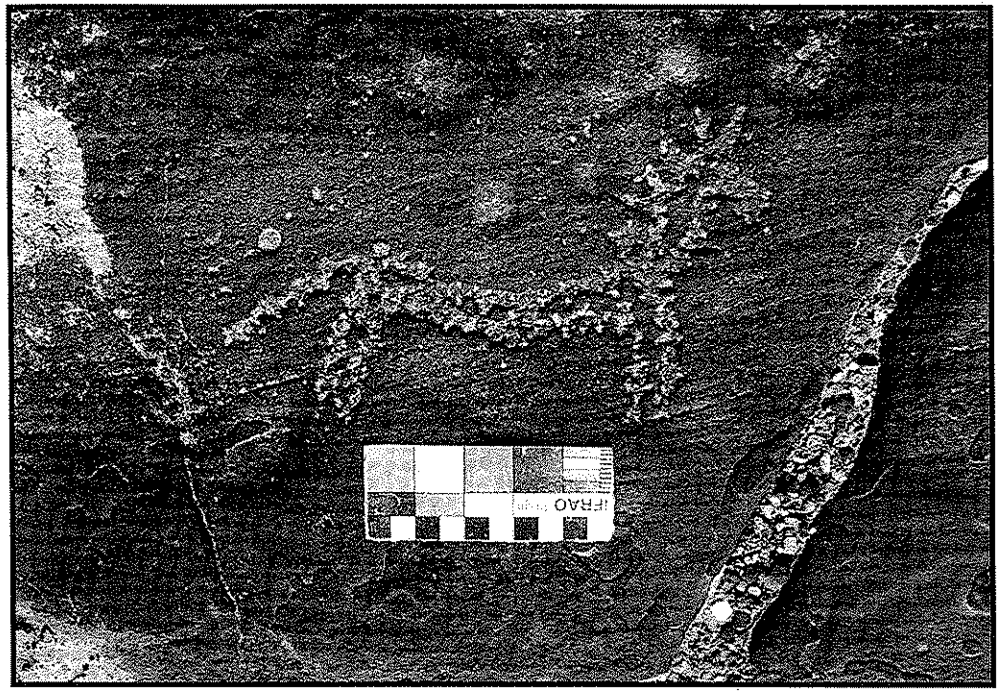




XI-14c : *'Brong* and one or two other animals.

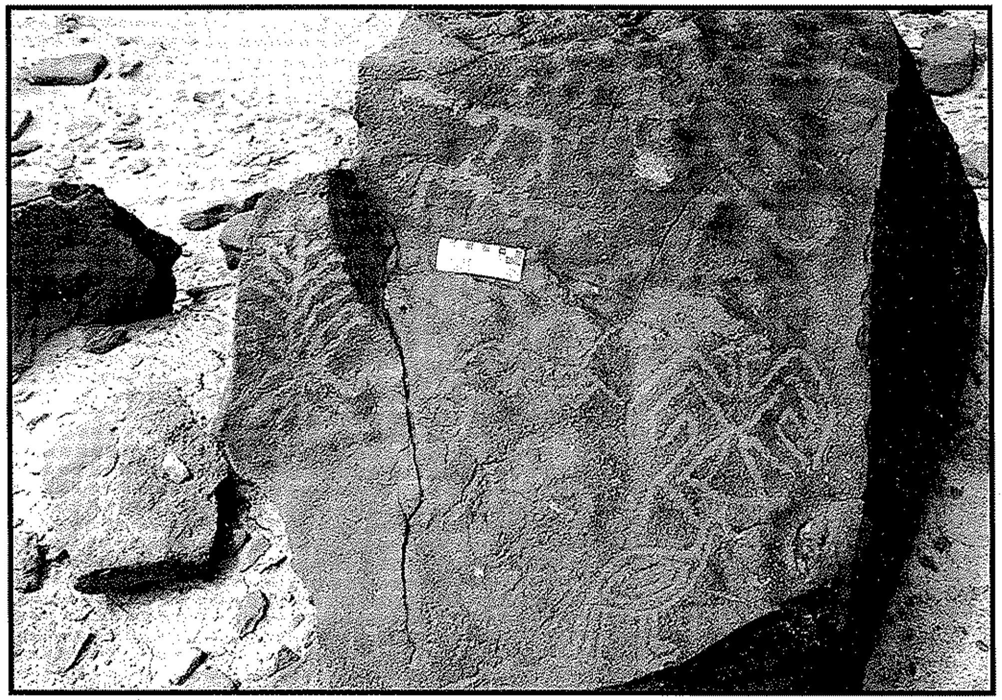
XI-15c : Two unidentified animals.





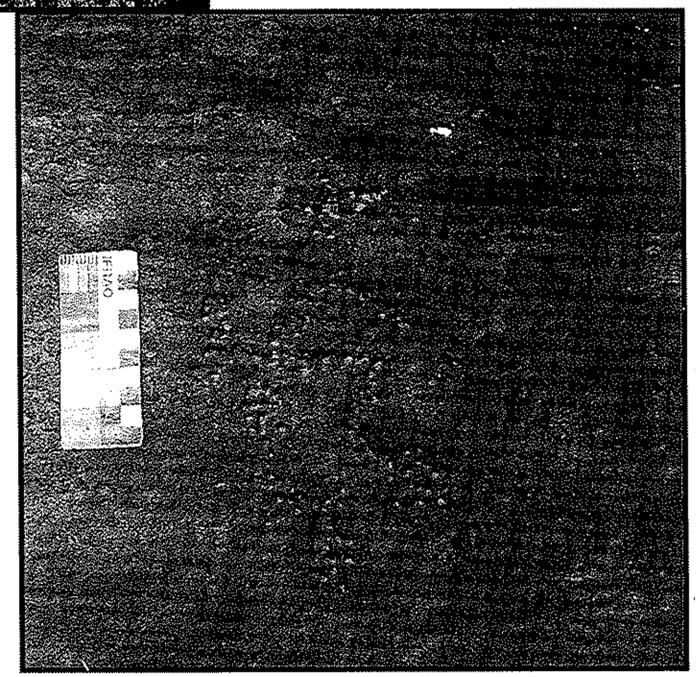
XI-16c : *rKyang*?

XI-17c : Mounted figures, *khyung*, bird in profile, tree and other figures.

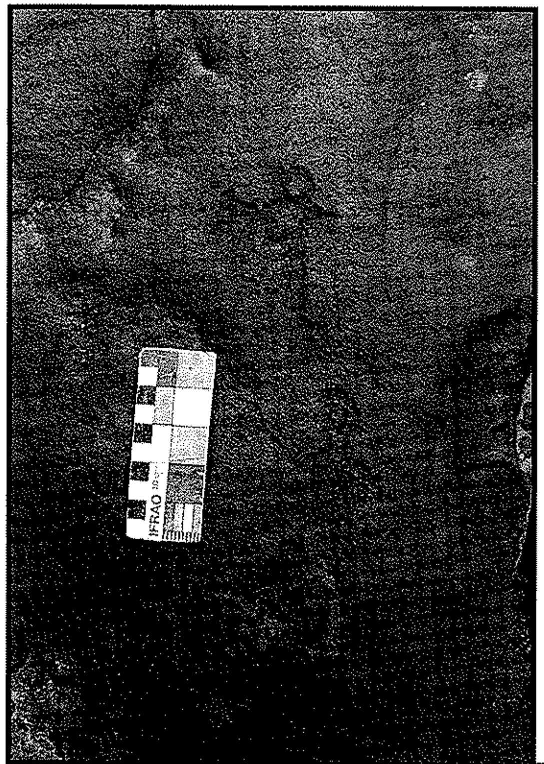




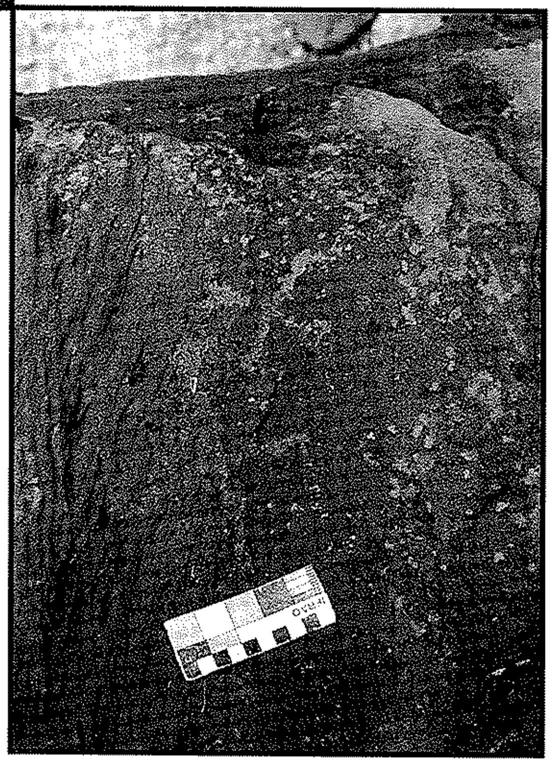
XI-18c : *Khyung*.



XI-19c : Anthropomorph.



XI-20c : Two anthropomorphs.



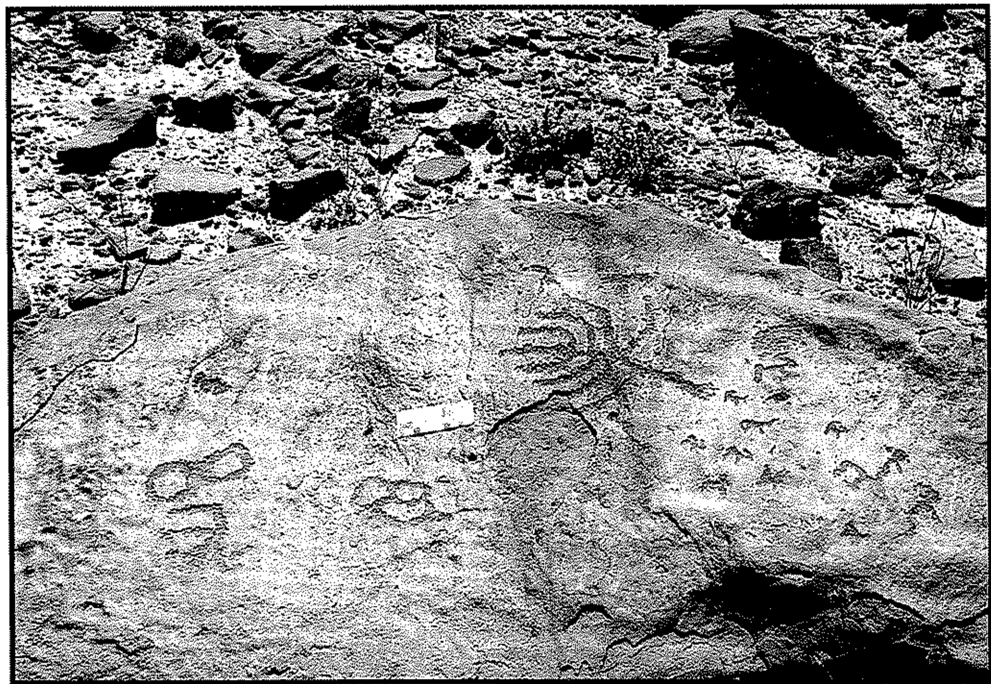
XI-21c : Two *g.yung drung*.



XI-22c : Sun and two crescent moon symbols.

XI-23c : Sun symbol.





XI-24c : Animals, 'tree' and circular markings.

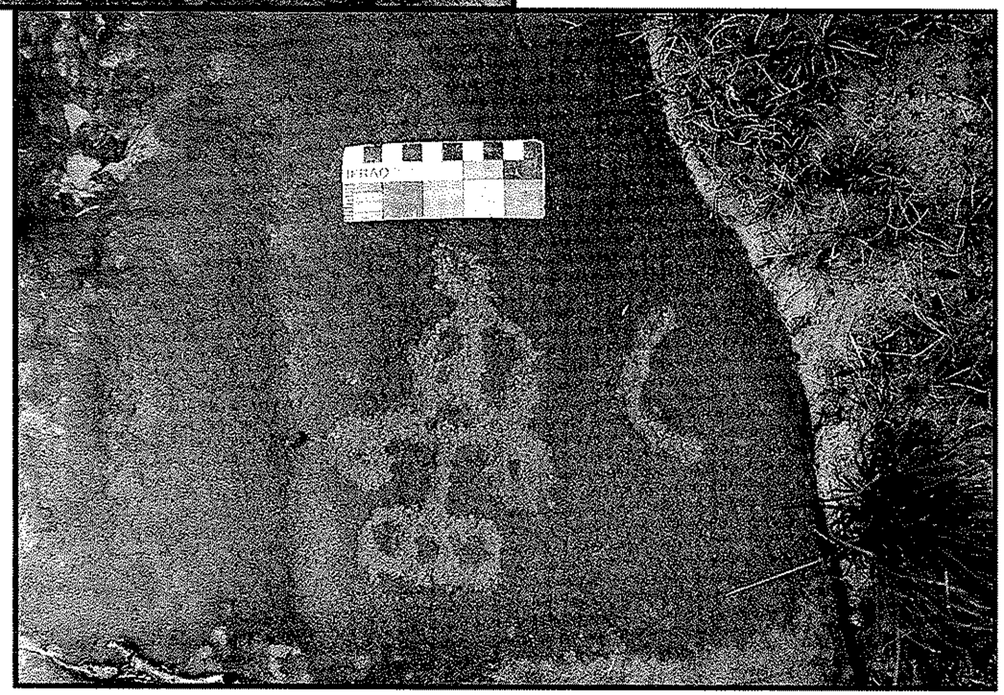


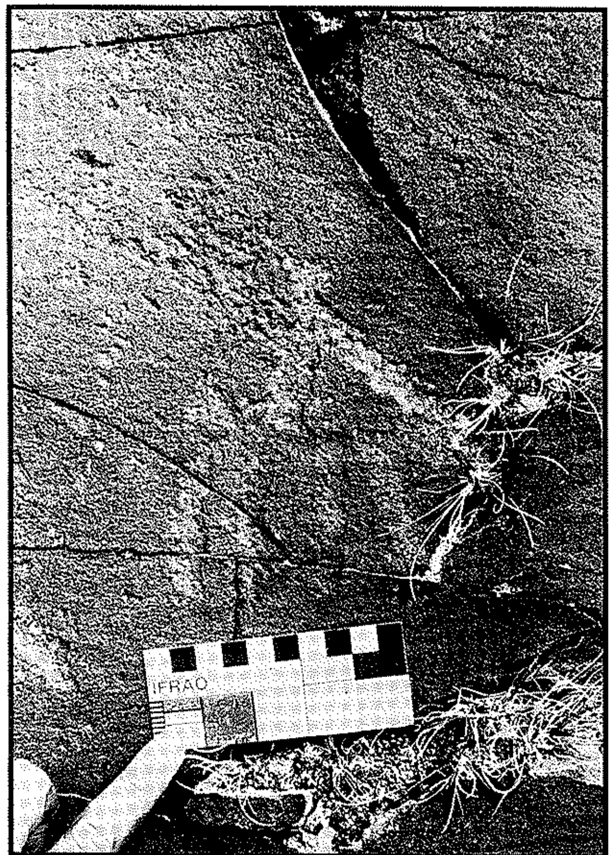
XI-25c : Unidentified composition.



XI-26c : Unidentified composition.

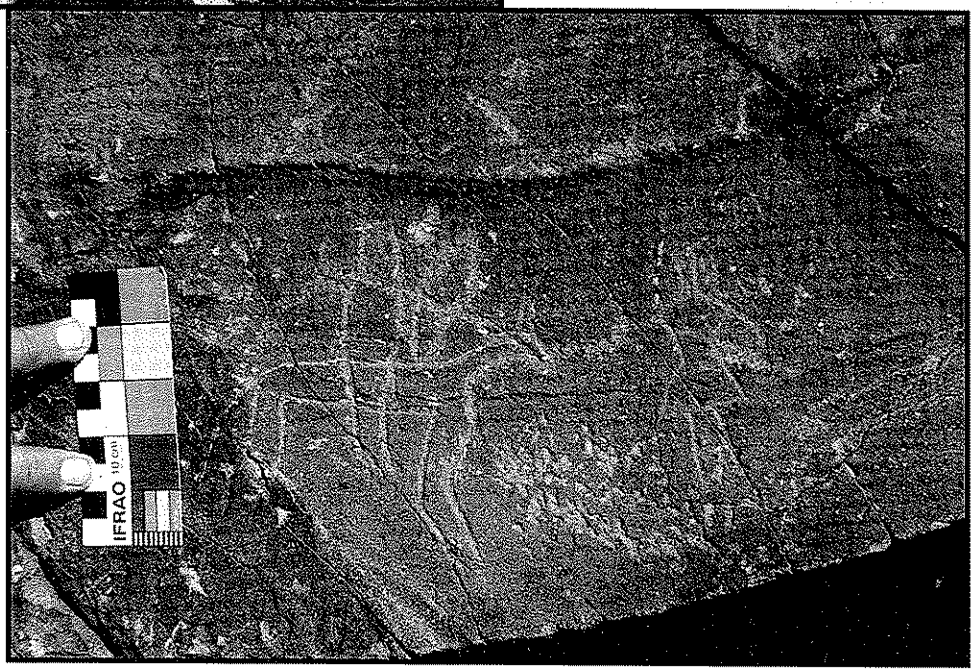
XI-27c : Unidentified composition.





XI-1d : Mounted figure.

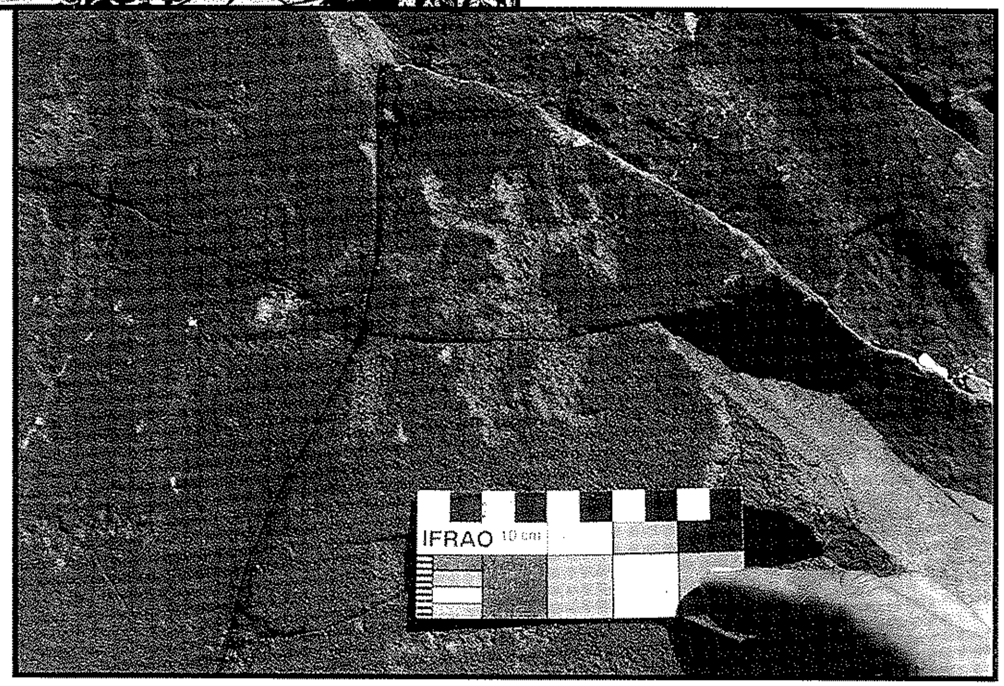
XI-2d : Mounted and standing figures.

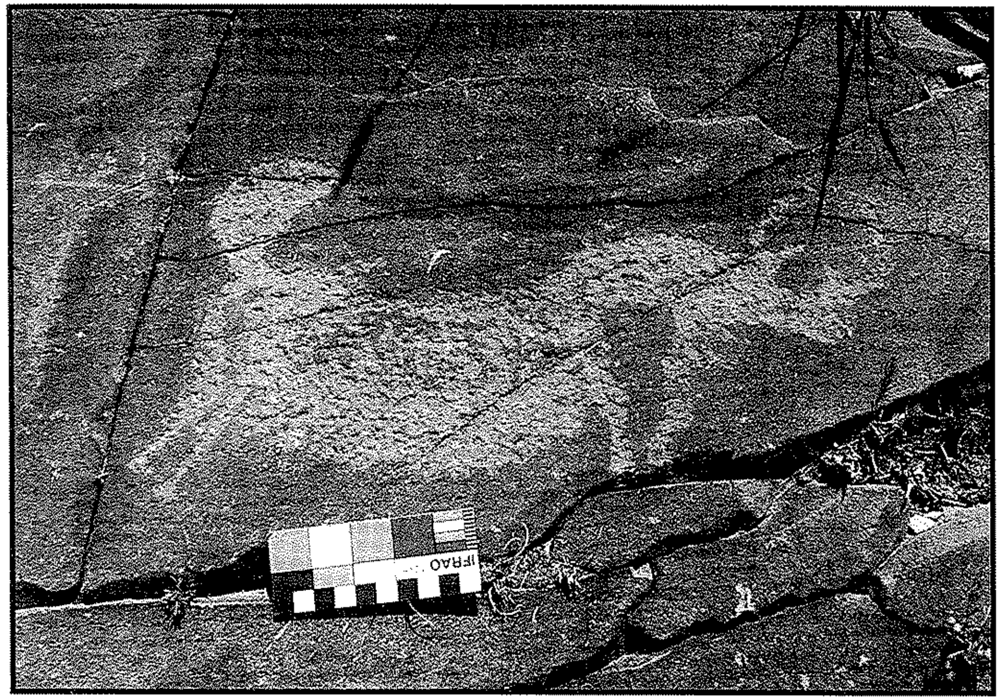




XI-3d : Standing archer.

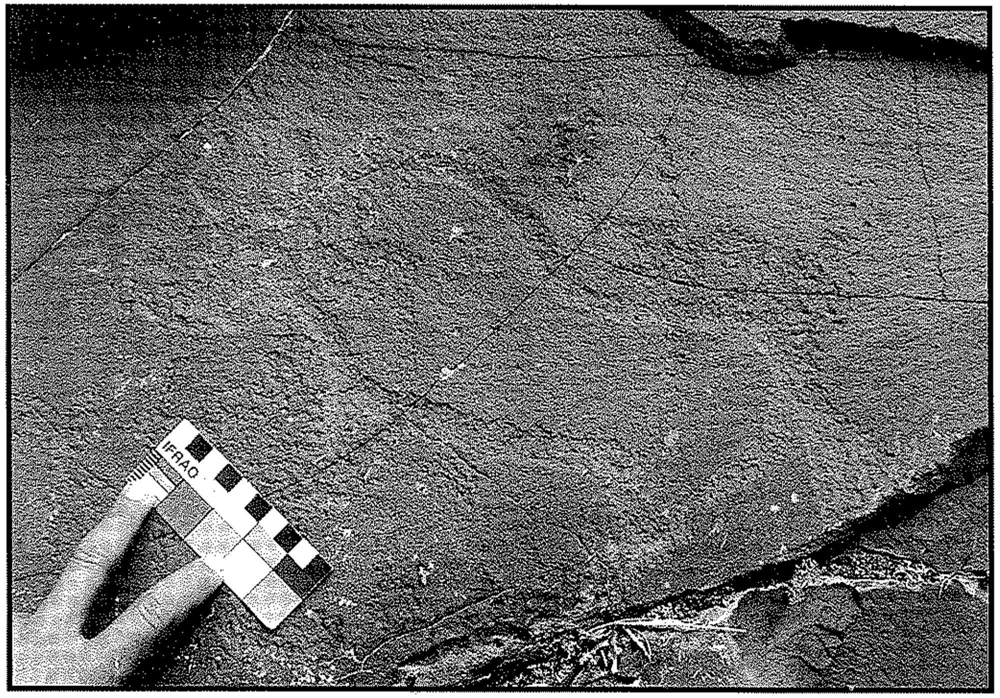
XI-4d : Standing archer and animals.

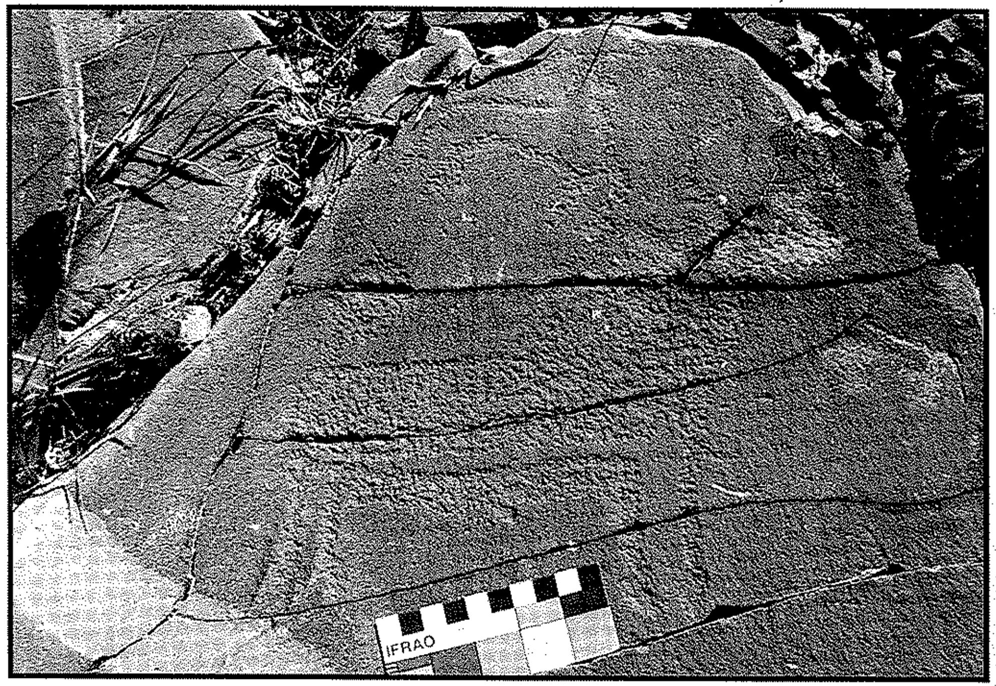




XI-5d : *'Brong.*

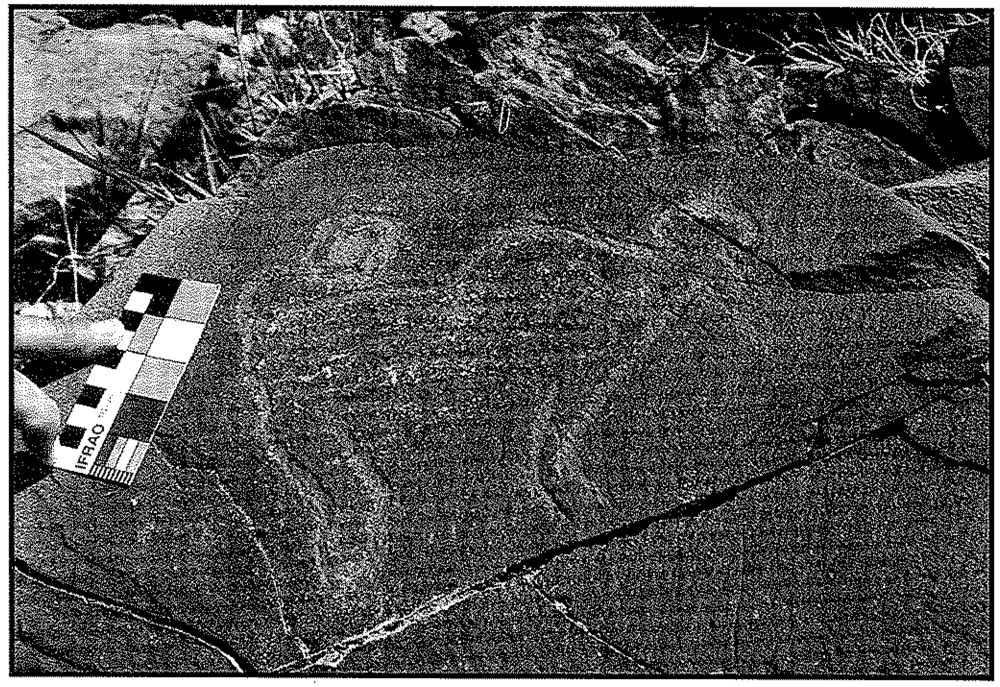
XI-6d : *'Brong.*

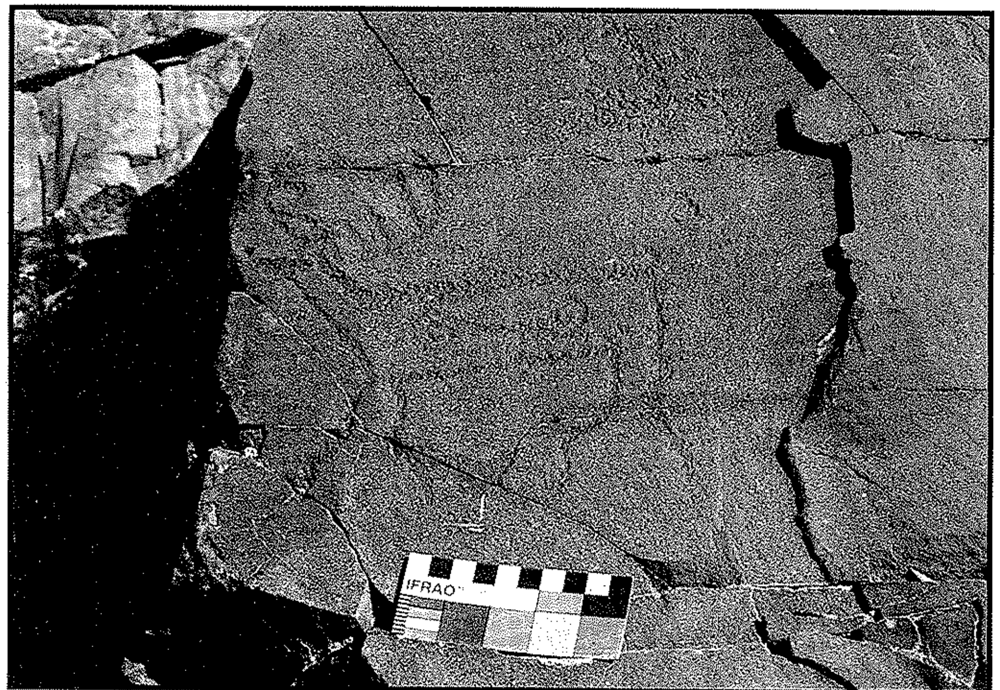




XI-7d : *'Brong.*

XI-8d : *'Brong.*

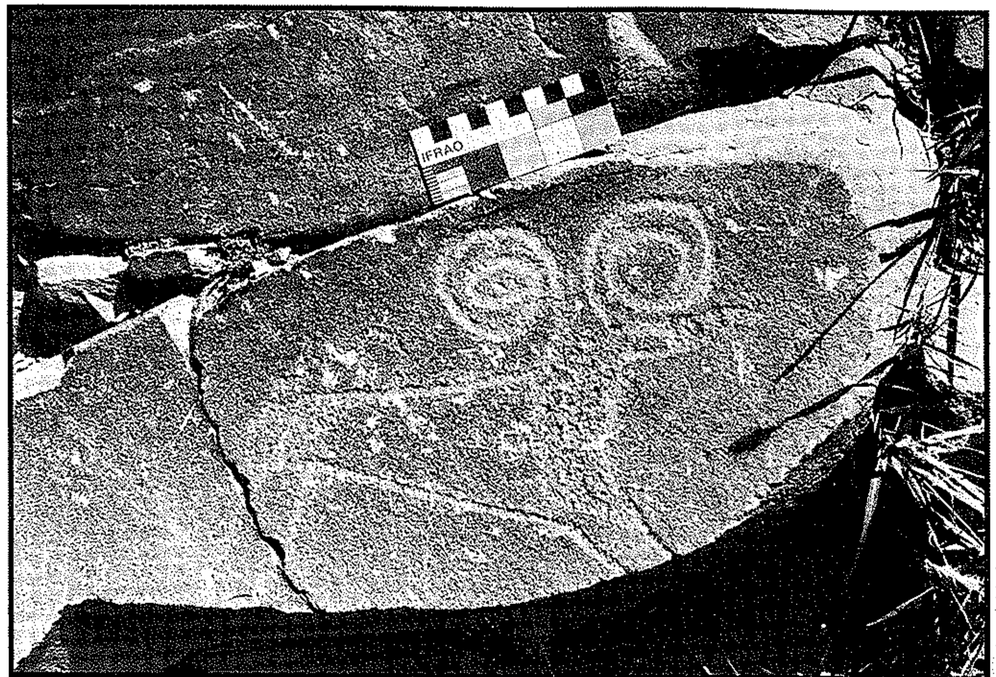




XI-9d : Deer.



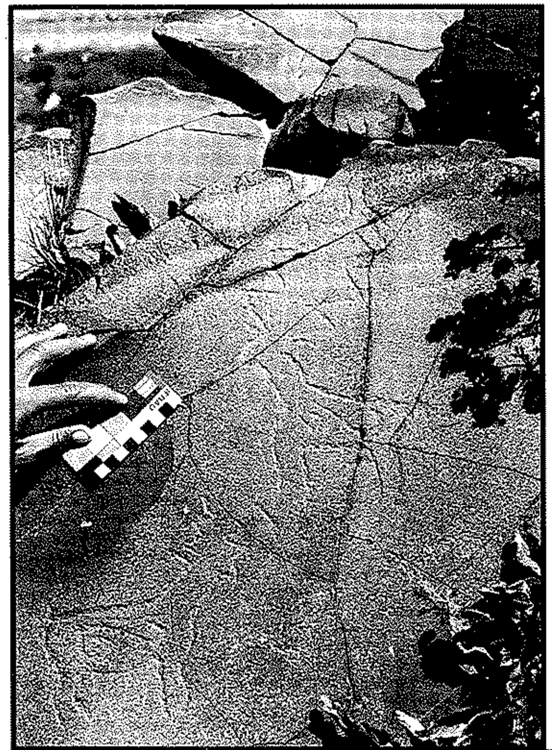
XI-10d : Deer.



XI-11d : Wild ungulate.



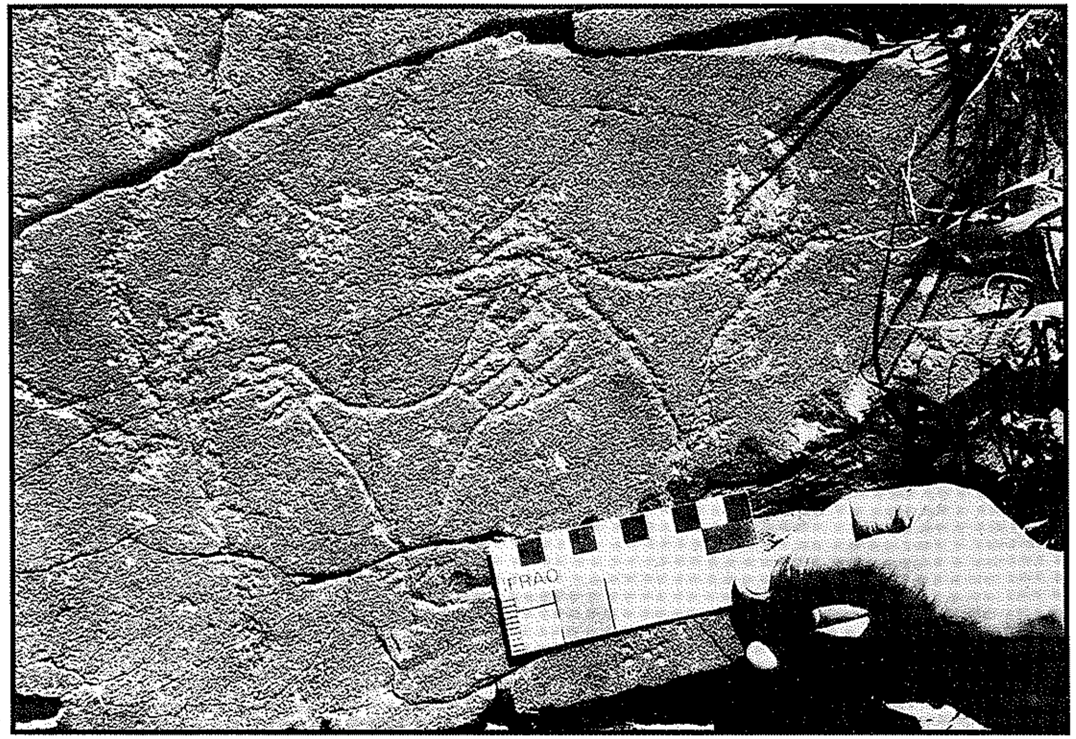
XI-12d : Wild ungulates.



XI-13d : Two ungulates.



XI-14d : Two horses or *rkyang*.



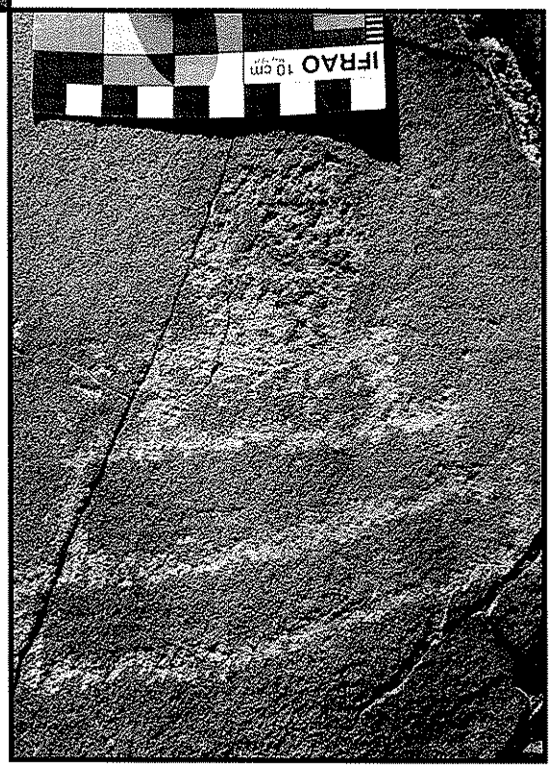
XI-15d : Two bird-like figures.



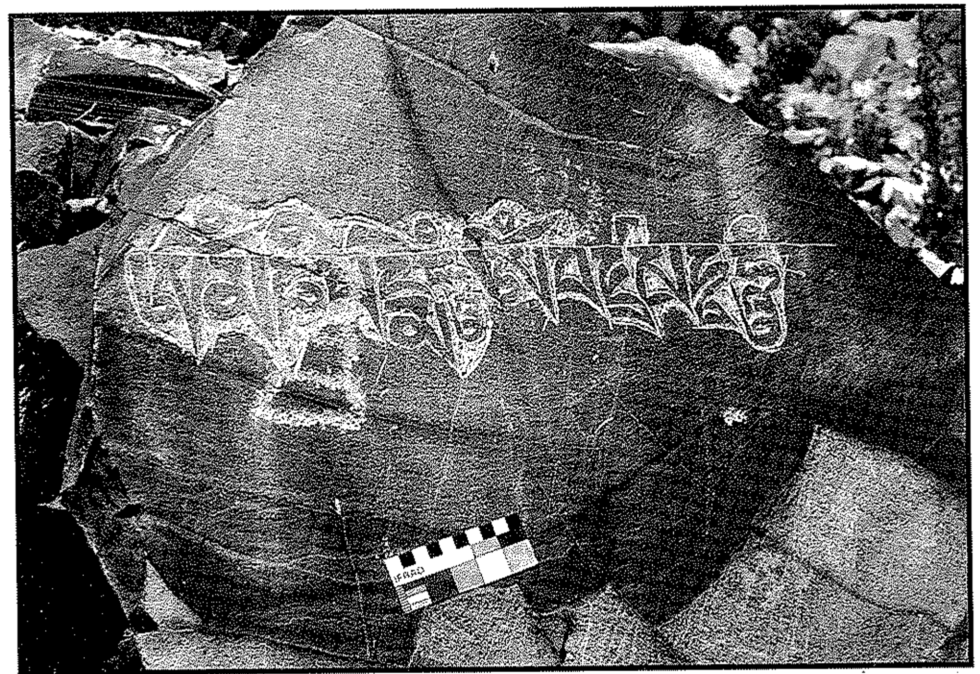
XI-16d : Bird with outstretched wings.



XI-17d : *mChod rten*-like depiction.

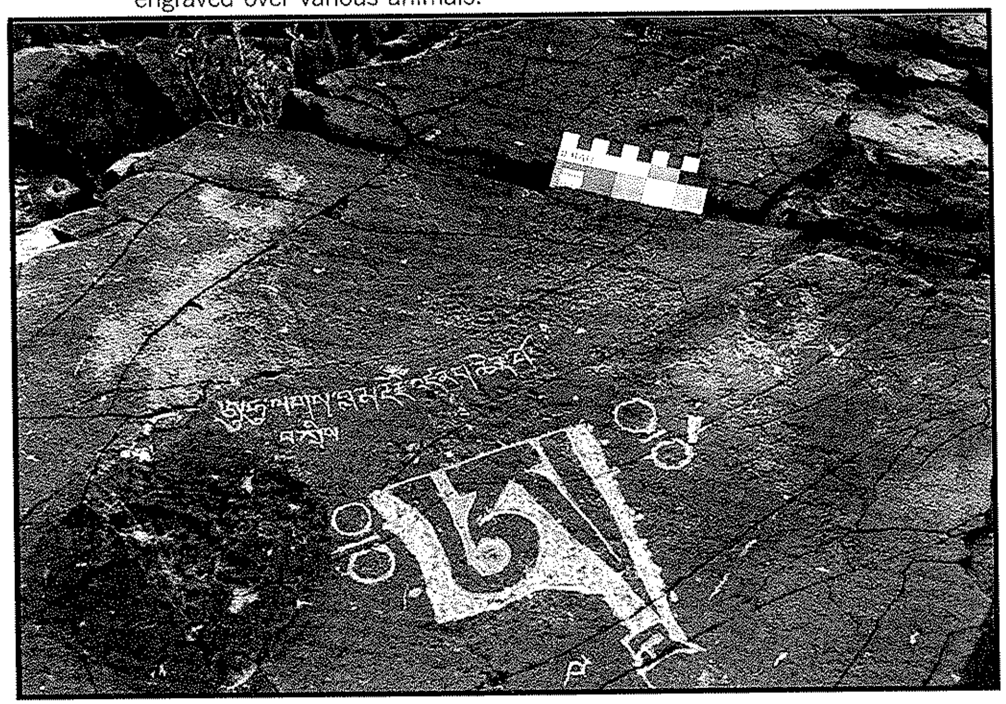


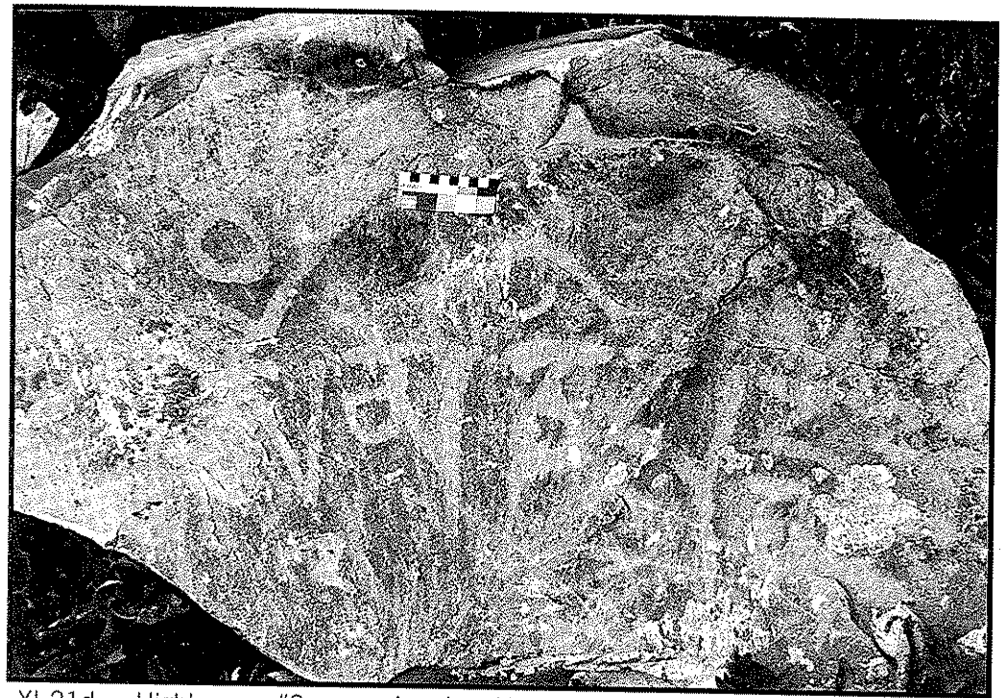
XI-18d : *mChod rten*-like depiction.



XI-19d : "Om ma ni padme Hum" and "Om ba rdza satwa Hum" mantras superimposed on *mchod-rten*-like depiction.

XI-20d : Inscriptions reading "A'" and "U Hu lags bla ma rdo rje 'dzan pa chen po" engraved over various animals.

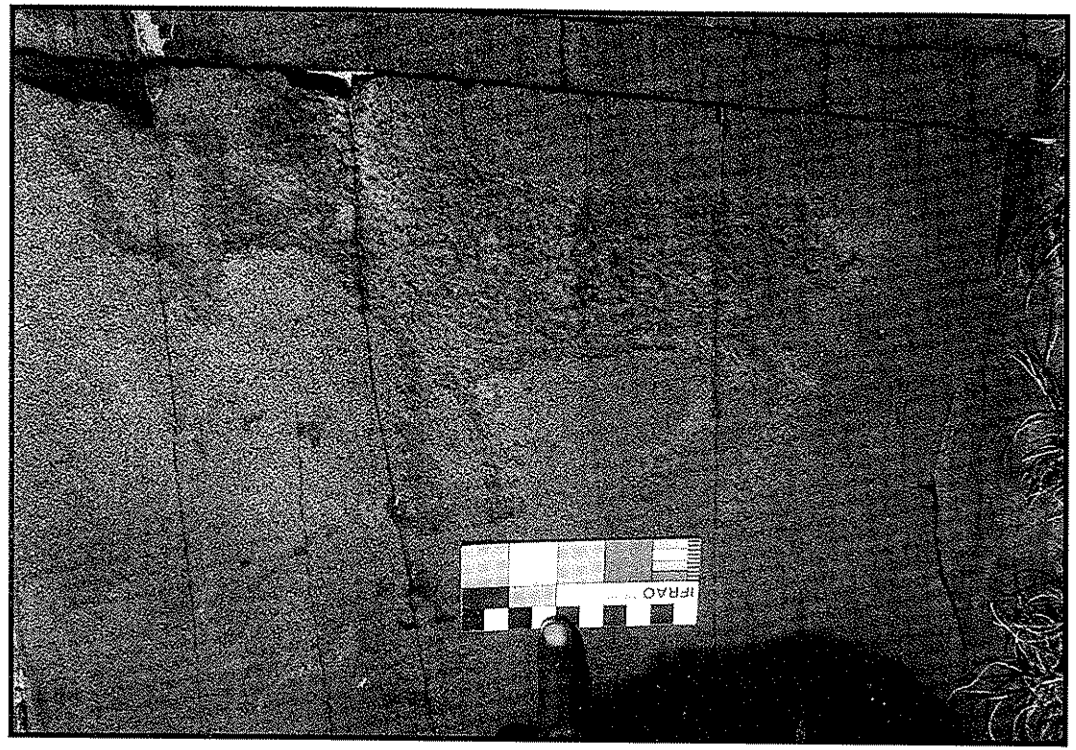




XI-21d : Highly worn "Om ma <u>ni</u> padme Hum."

XI-1e : Depiction of a yak and inscription reading "g.yag."

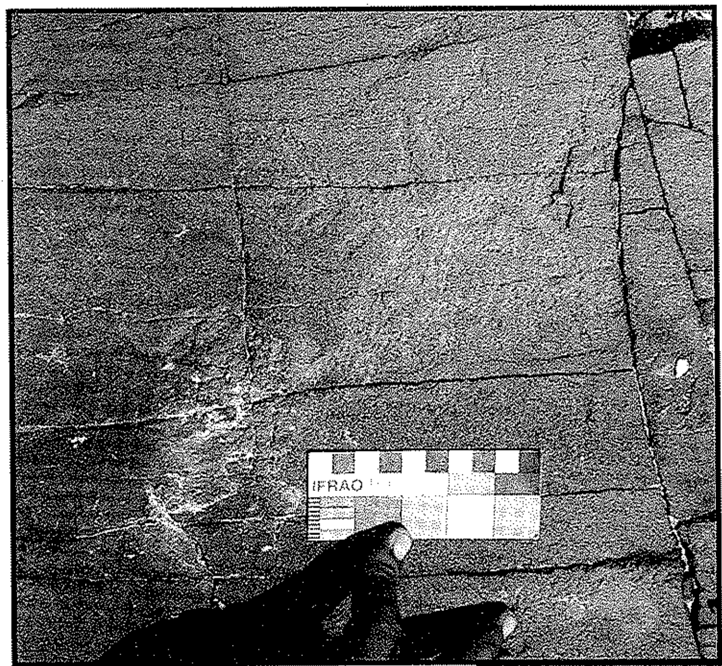




XI-2e : Yak.



XI-3e : Raptor with spread wings.



XI-4e : Raptor with spread wings.

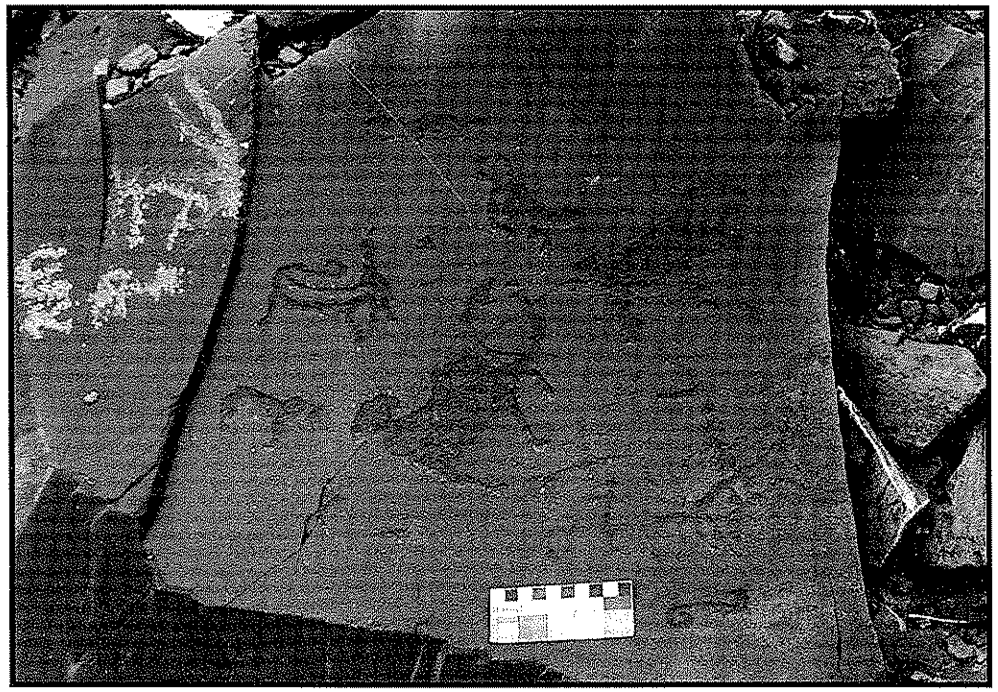


XI-5e : Raptor with spread wings.



XI-1f : Two *'brong*.

XI-2f : *'Brong*, other animals and three mounted figures. Note the stark contrast between the older figures on the right side of the boulder and the more recent ones on the left side.





▲

XI-3f : *'Brong* and perhaps other animals.



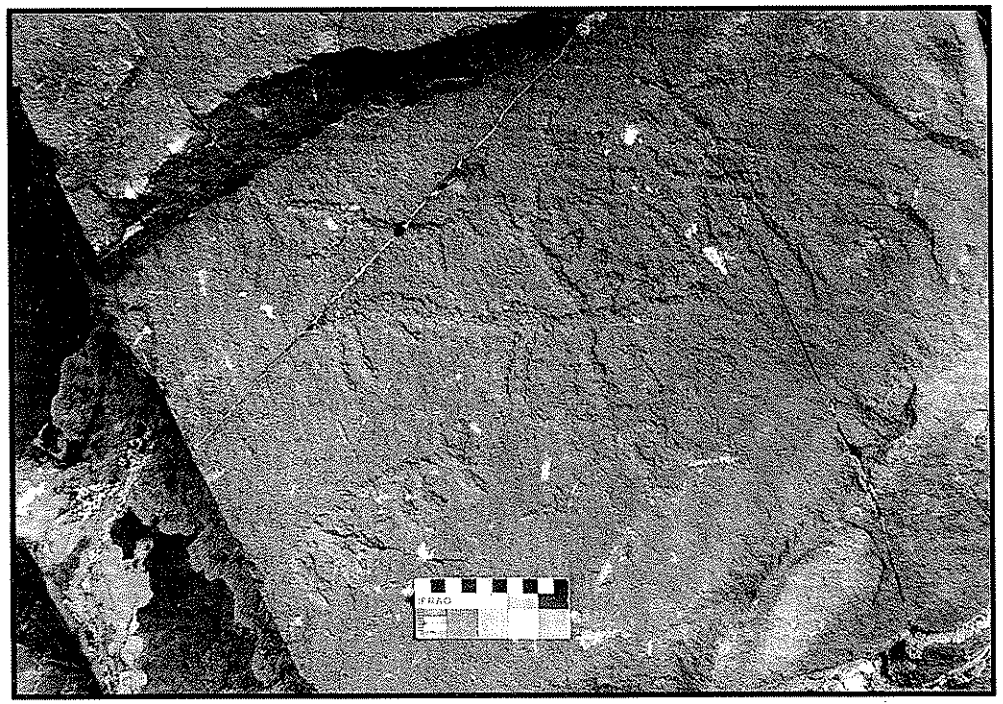
▶

XI-4f : Two *'brong*, standing archer and other figures.



XI-5f : Complex hunting scene.

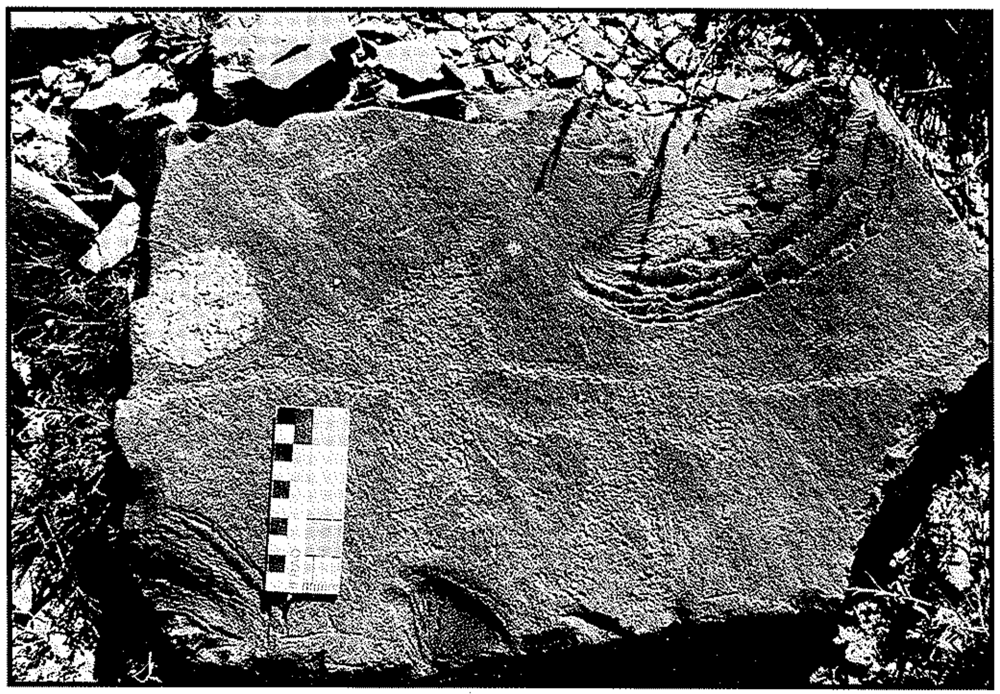
XI-6f : Several elongated animals.

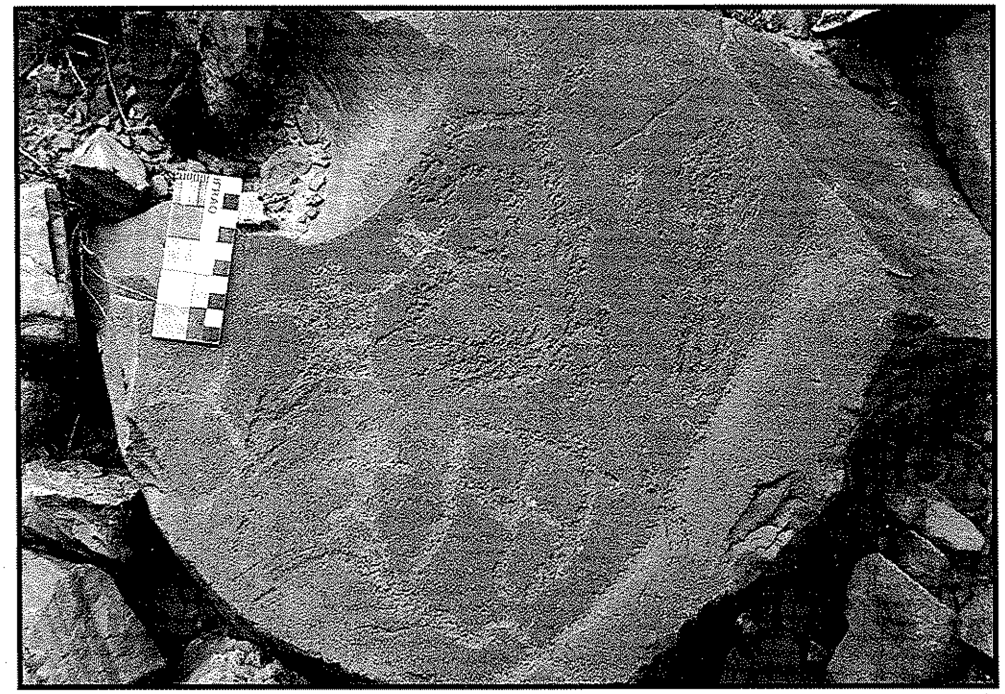




XI-7f : A pair of anthropomorphs.

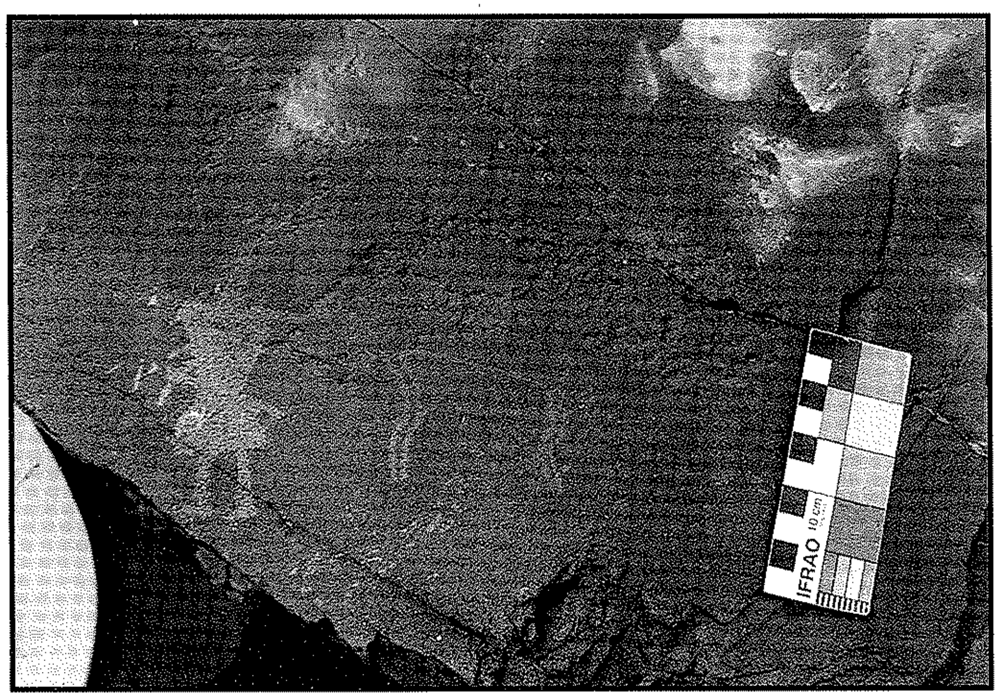
XI-8f : A pair of anthropomorphs.





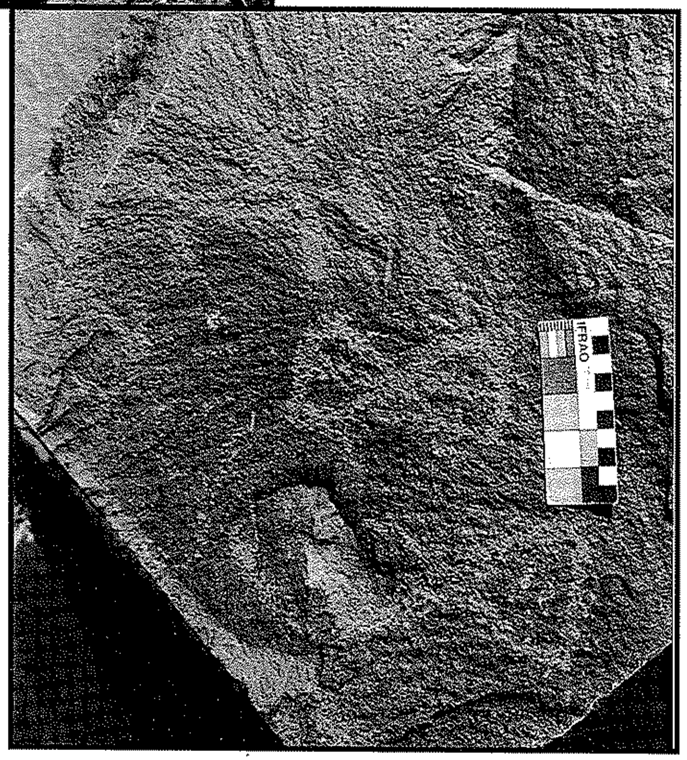
XI-9f : Cruciform design, two anthropomorphs and *rdo rje*-like motif.

XI-10f : Anthropomorph and animal.

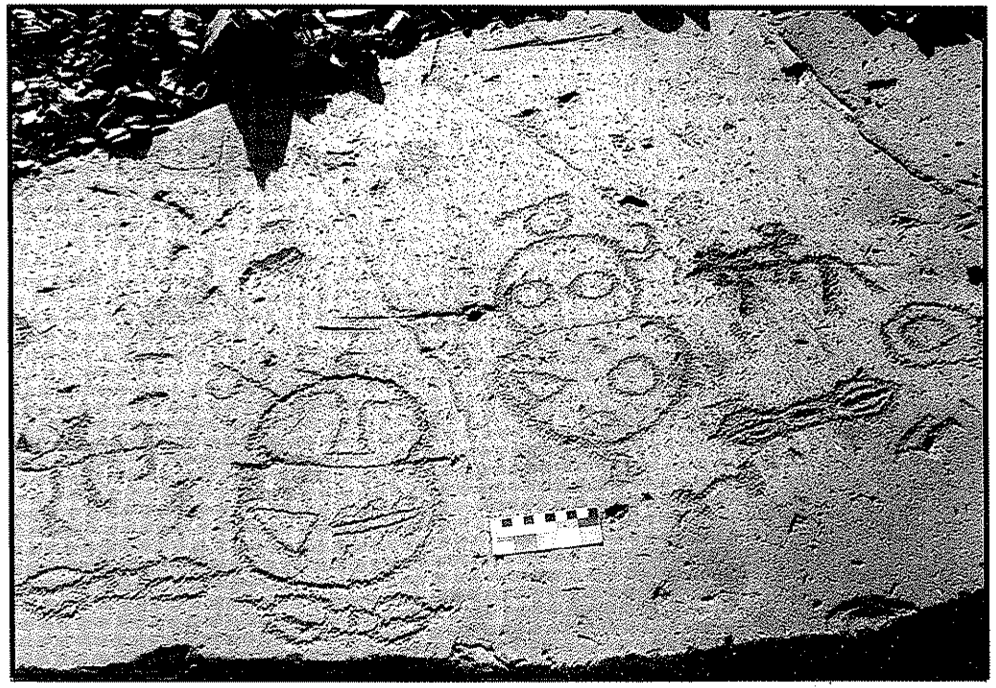




XI-11f : Bird-like figure and *g.yung drung*.

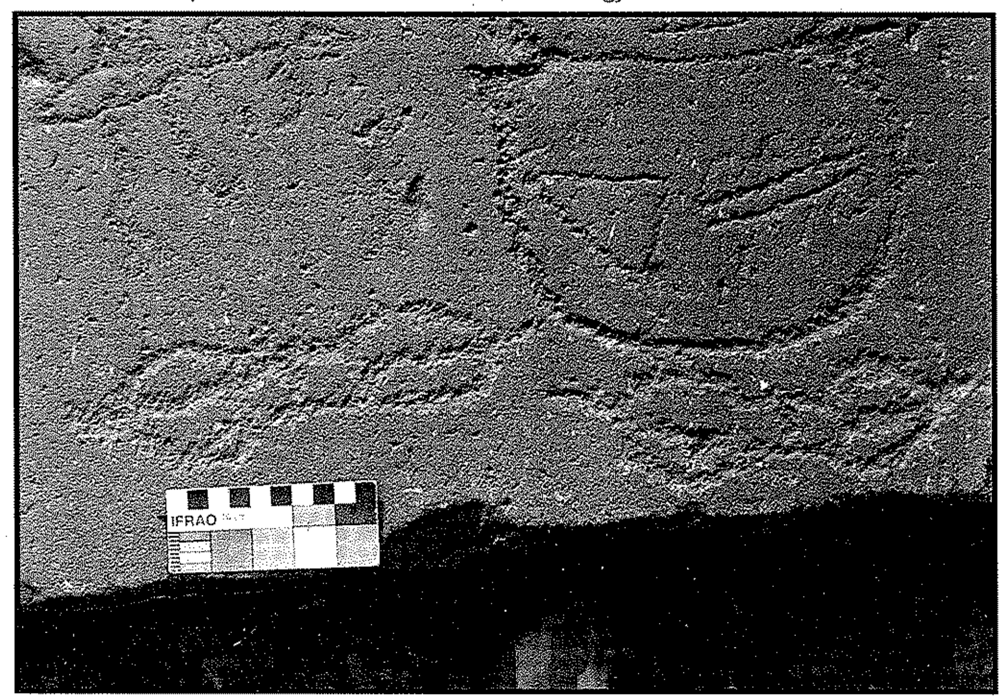


XI-12f : Animal and two hourglass-like motifs.



XI-13f : Standing figure, mounted figure, three *rdo rje* and circular designs.

XI-14f : Note the difference in the patinas of the two *rdo rje* and bi-circular composition on which a relative chronology can be based.





XI-15f : Bi-circular composition.

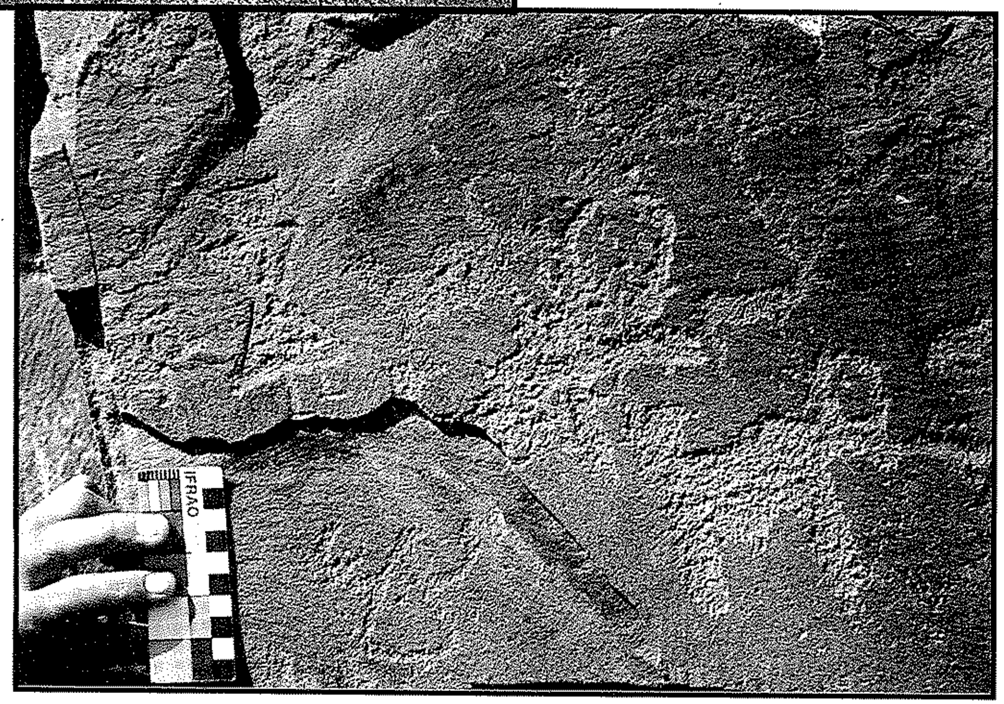


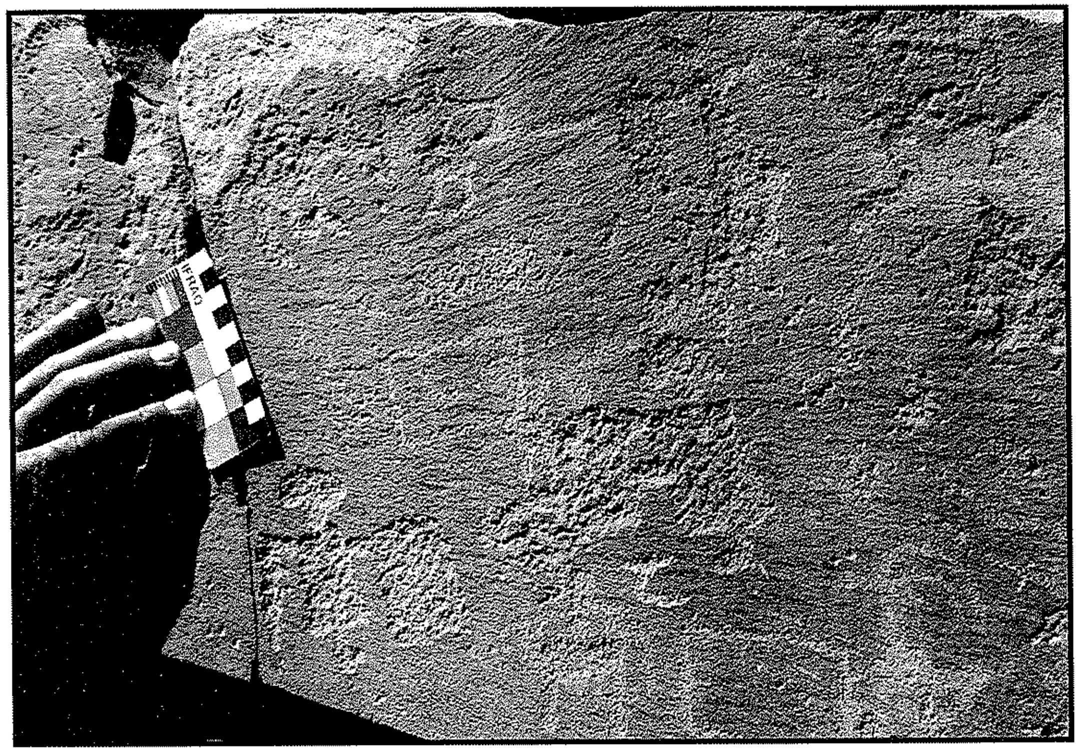
XI-16f : Bi-circular composition.



XI-17f : Two bi-circular compositions at Ri mo gdong.

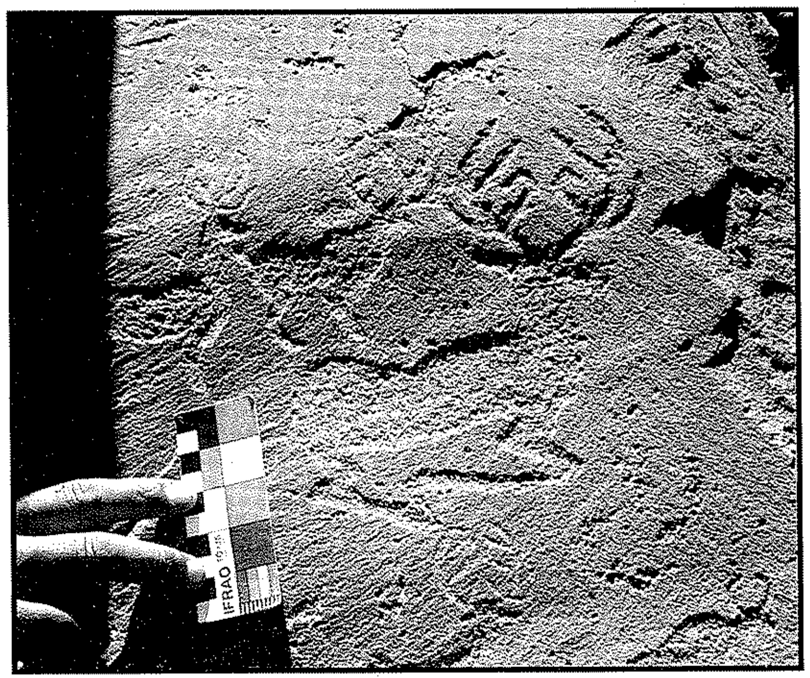
XI-1g : Bi-triangular anthropomorph, bird-like figure, three *'brong* and stag.





XI-2g : Anthropomorphs with square shield-like objects, one or two mounted figures, and one horned animal in the bottom right corner of the panel.

XI-3g : Deer, and a *'brong* at the bottom right corner of the photograph.

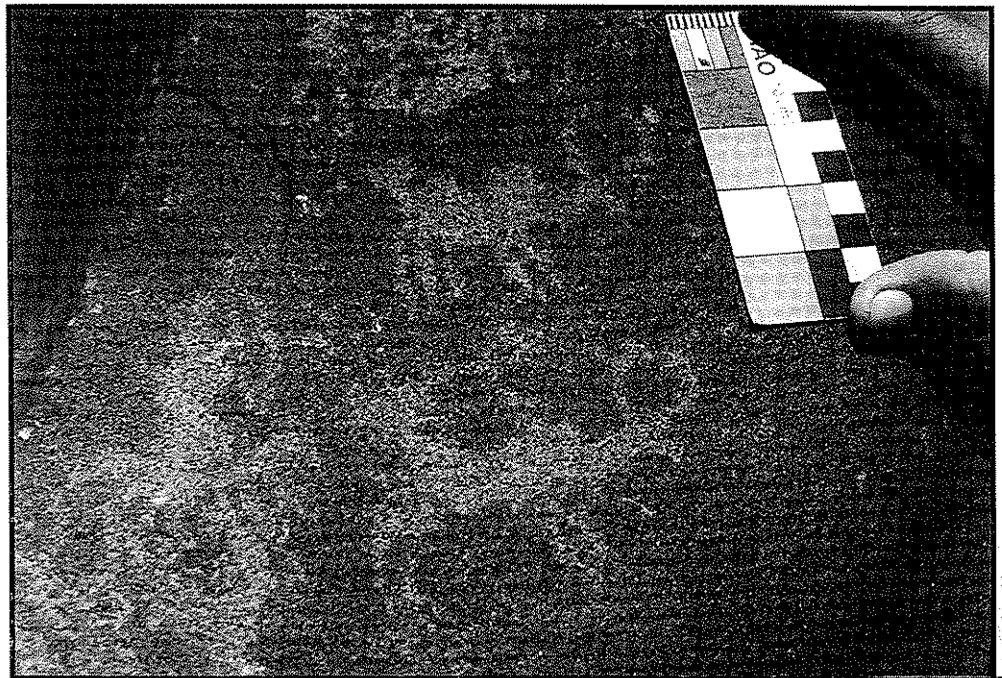




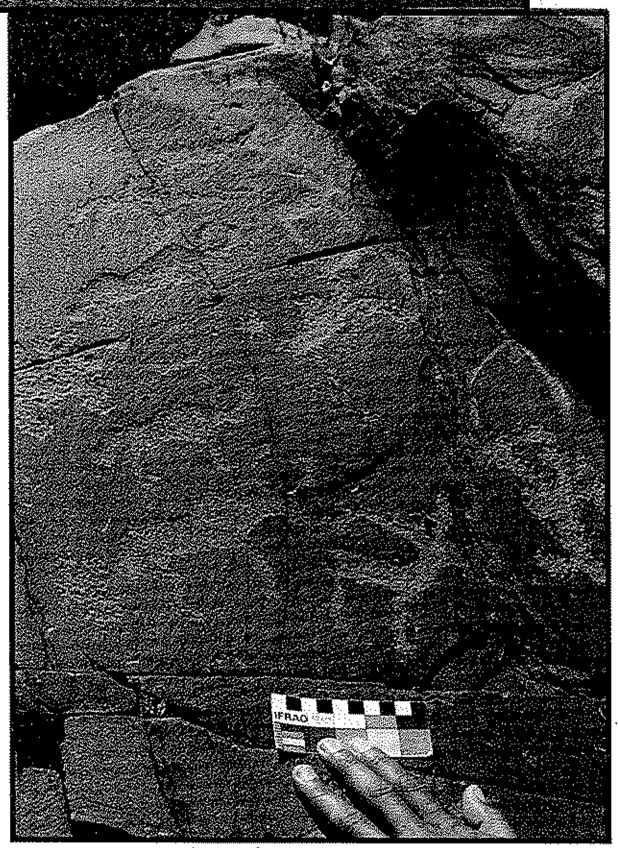
XI-4g : Mating yaks?

XI-5g : Deer, *'brong* and two mounted hunters.

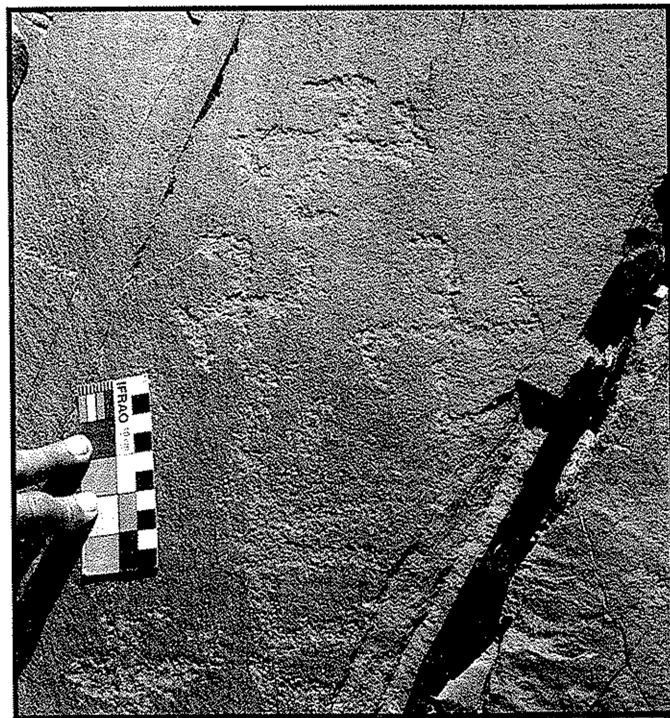




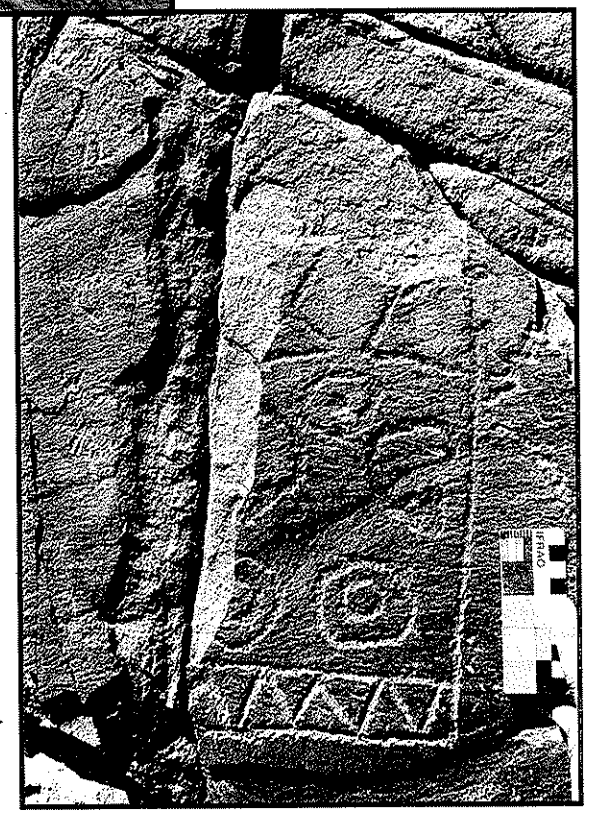
XI-6g : Mounted archer in pursuit of *'brong*.



XI-7g : *'Brong* and other ungulates.



XI-8g : Three *g.yung drung*.

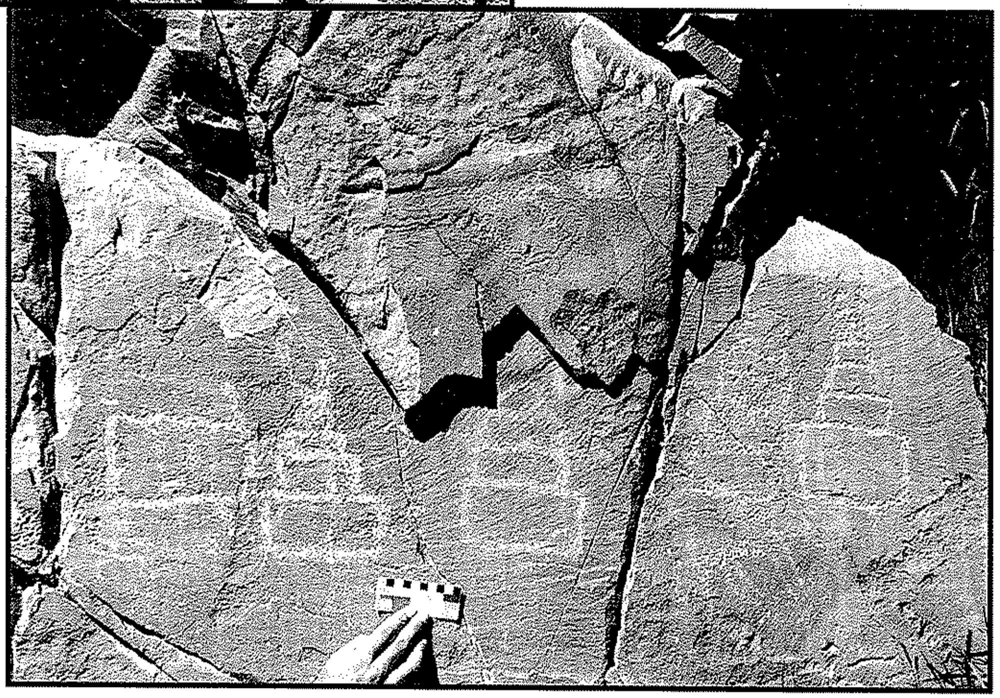


XI-9g : Unidentified geometric composition.



XI-10g : *mChod rten*-like depiction.

XI-11g : Four completed and one incomplete archaic *mchod rten*.





XI-12g : Seven archaic *mchod rten* and one or two animals all exhibiting similar wear characteristics.



XI-13g : Archaic *mchod rten*.



XI-14g : Three archaic *mchod rten*.

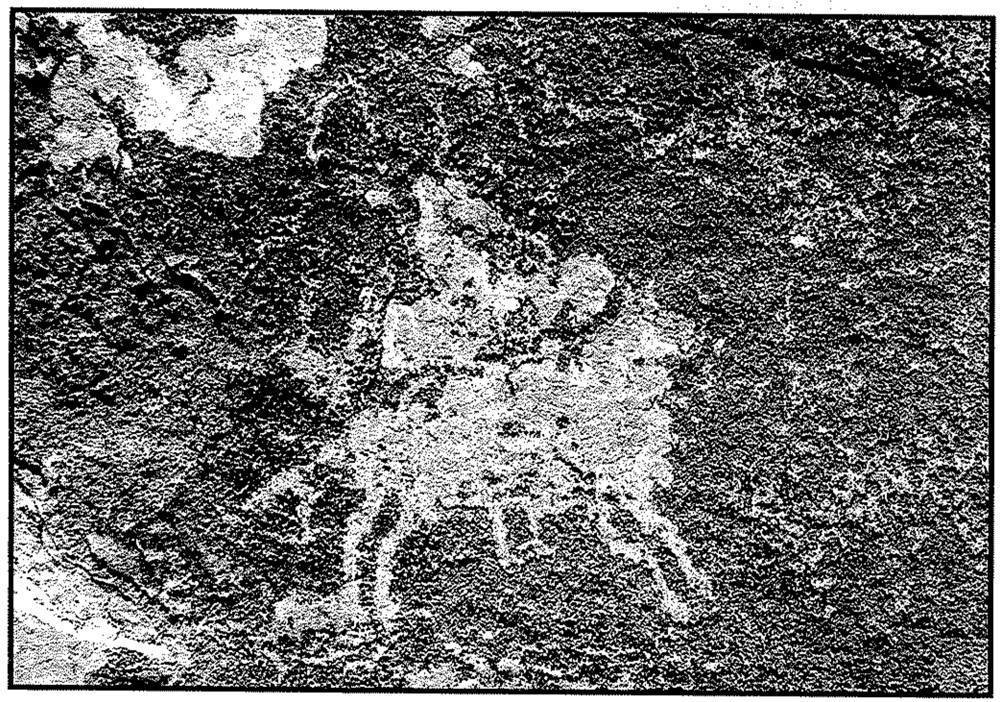


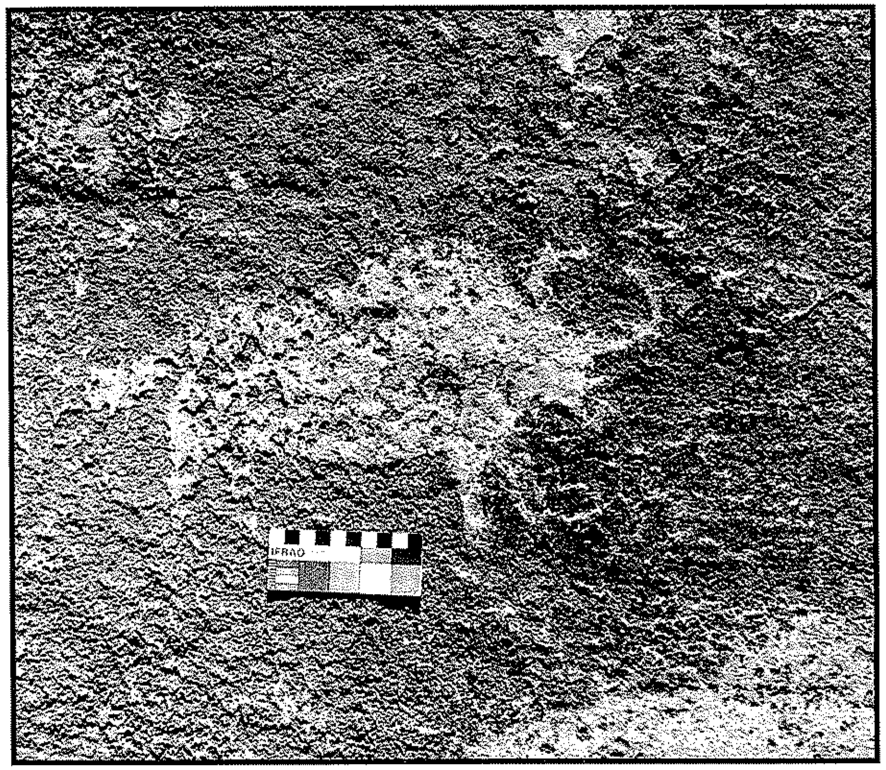
XI-15g : *mChod rten*.



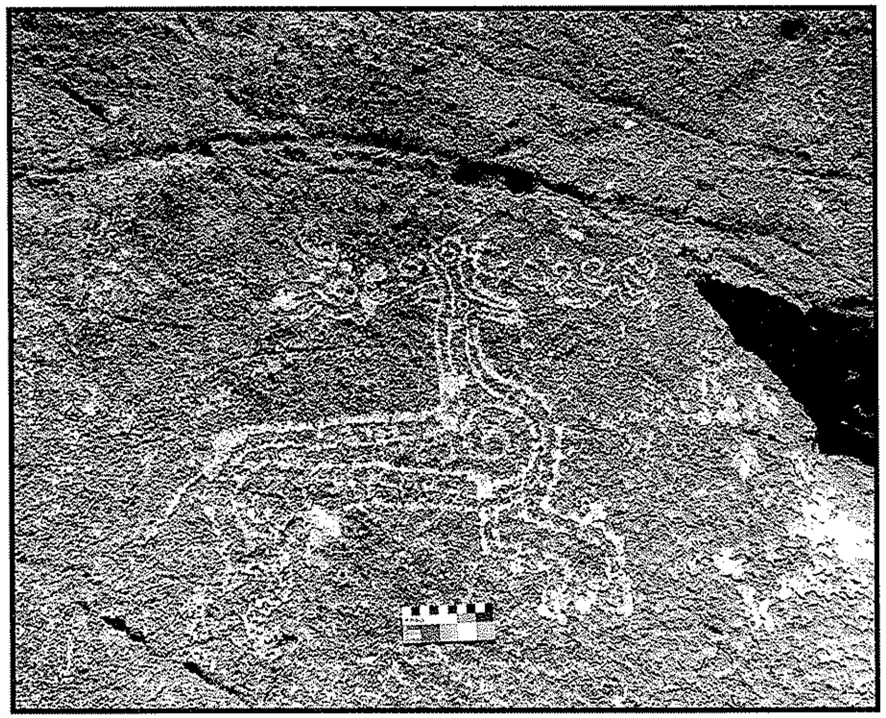
XI-16g : Incomplete *mani* mantra superimposed on large panel of animals.

XI-1h : Horseman.

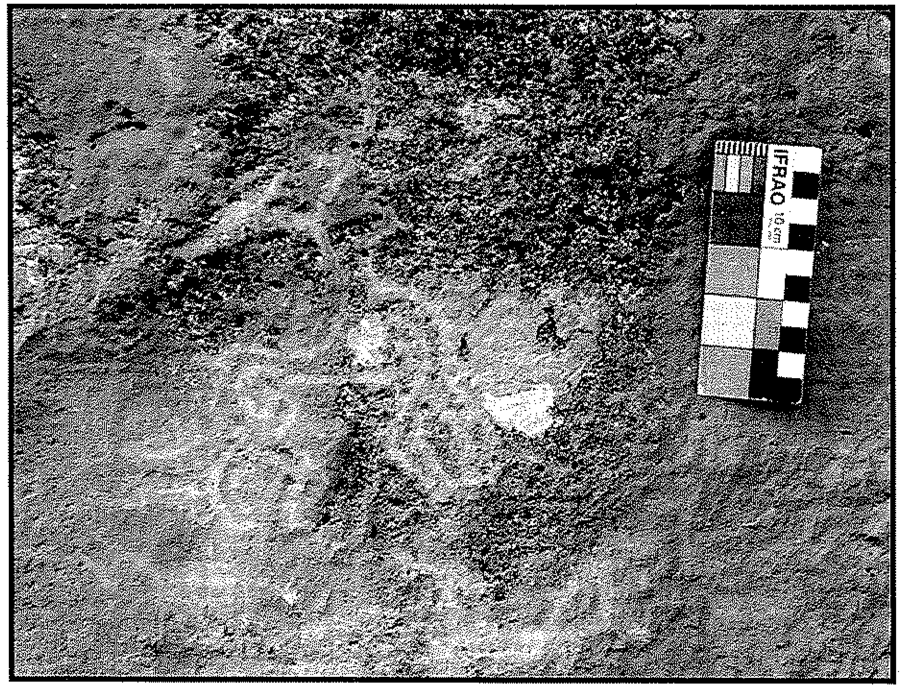




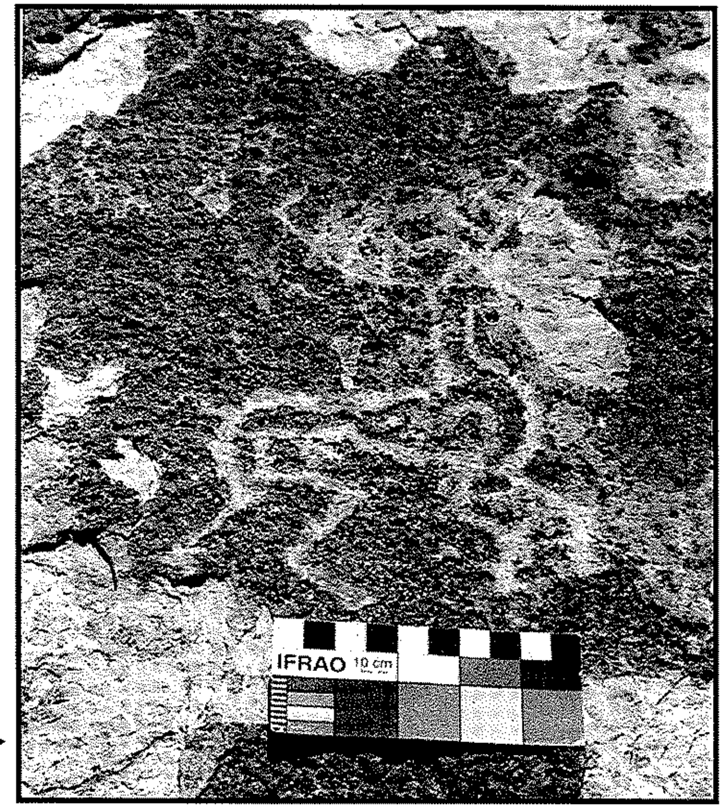
XI-2h : Yak.



XI-3h : Deer-like animal.



XI-1i : Deer.



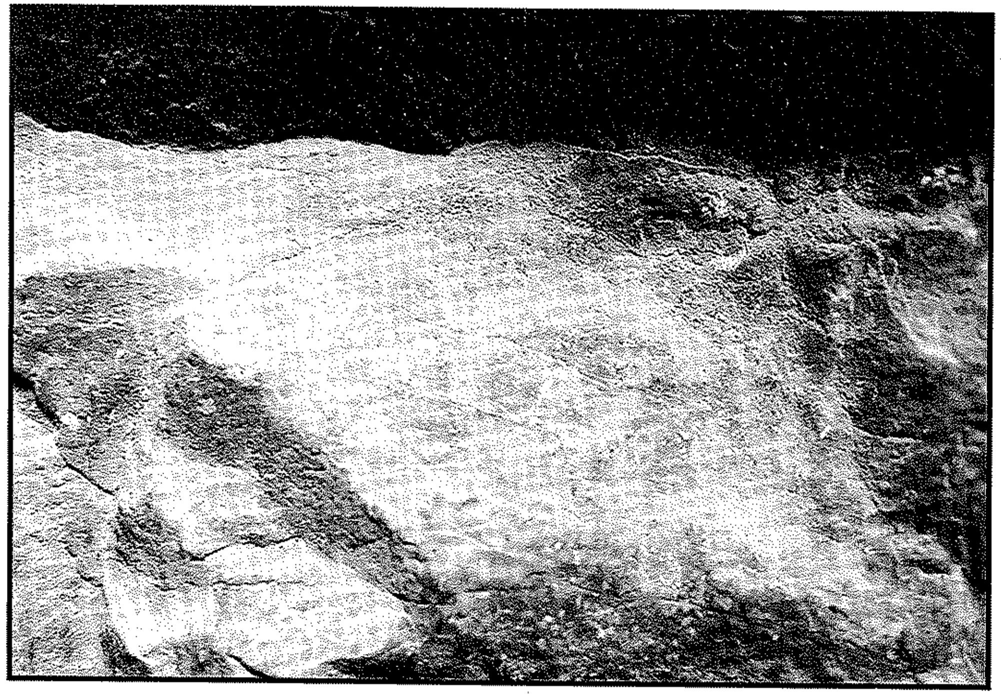
XI-2i : Deer.



XI-1j : *Nyi zla*, sunburst, tree and two *g.yung drung*.

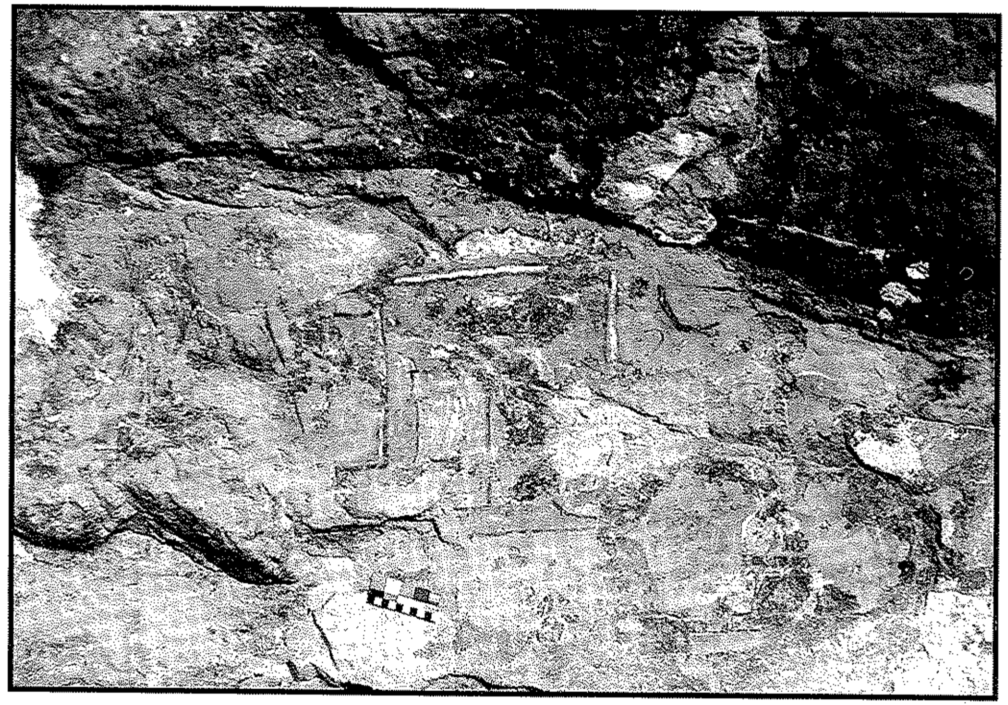


XI-2j : *mChod rten*.



XI-3j : Curvilinear motif.

XI-4j : Historical era panel.

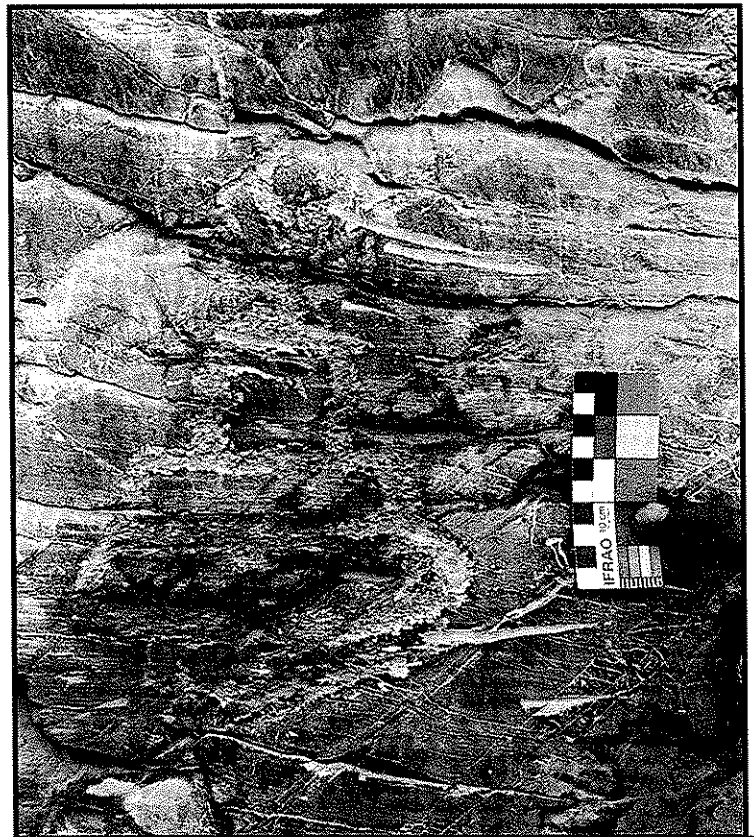




XI-5j : Buddhist *mchod rten*.

XI-1k : Stag and anthropomorph.





XI-2k : *mChod-rten*-like depiction.

XI-1l : Anthropomorphous and zoomorphic figures, and two bi-circular designs.

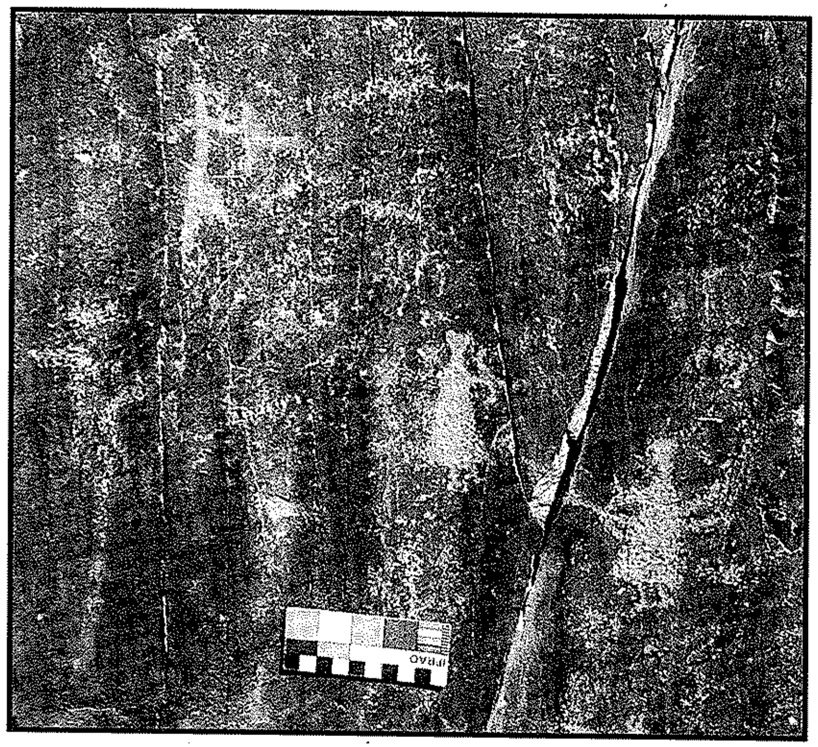




XI-2I : Part of large panel of animals, hunters and other depictions.

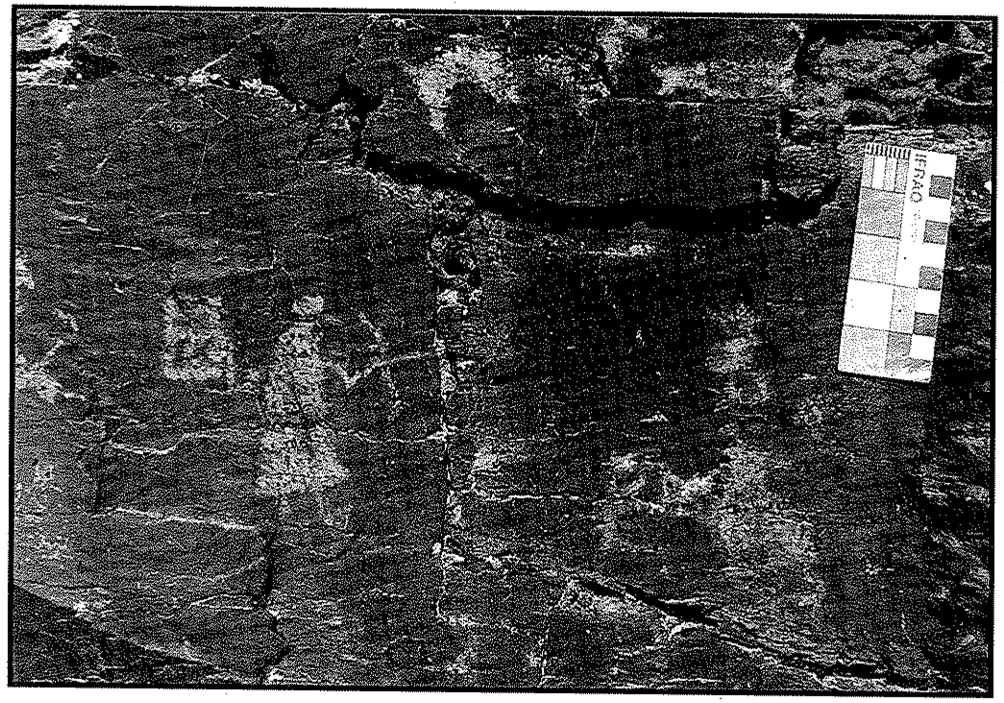
XI-3I : Horseman.

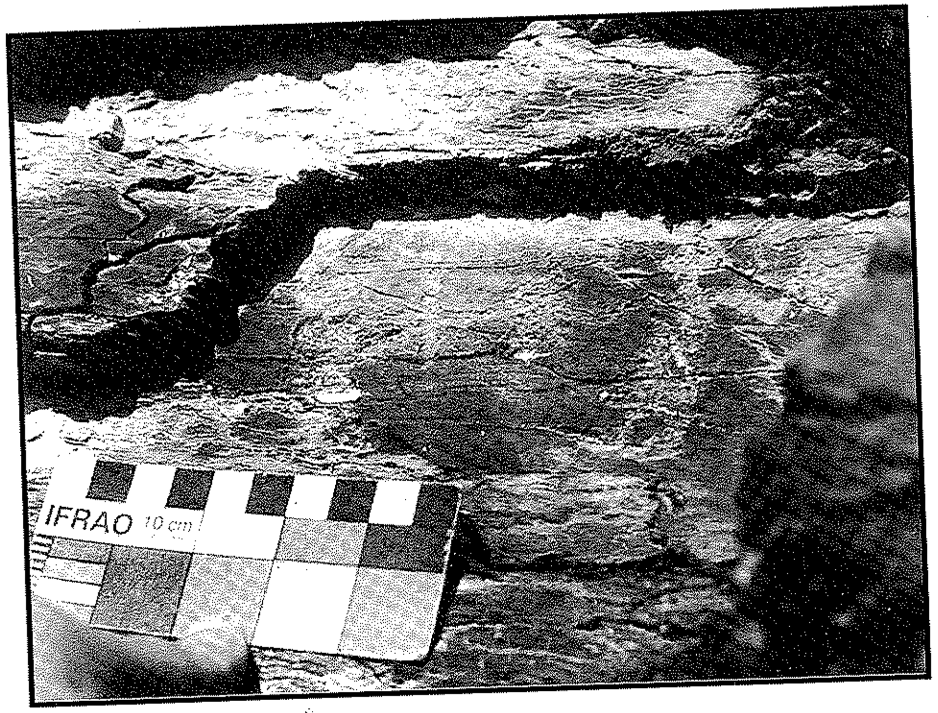




◀ XI-41 : Three combating figures.

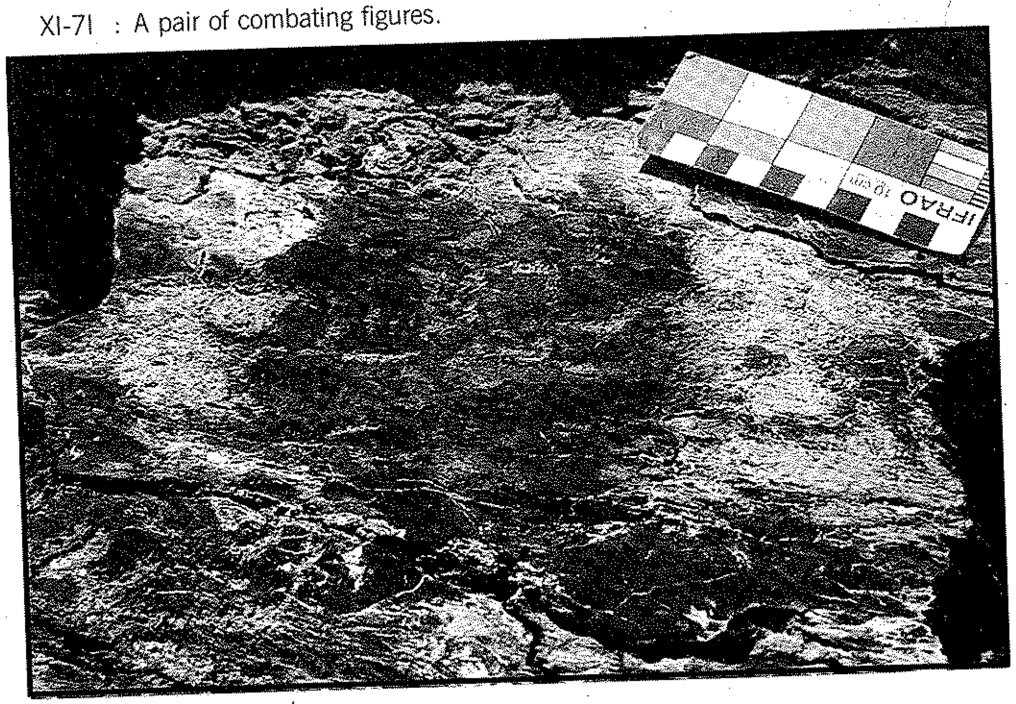
XI-5I : A pair combating figures.

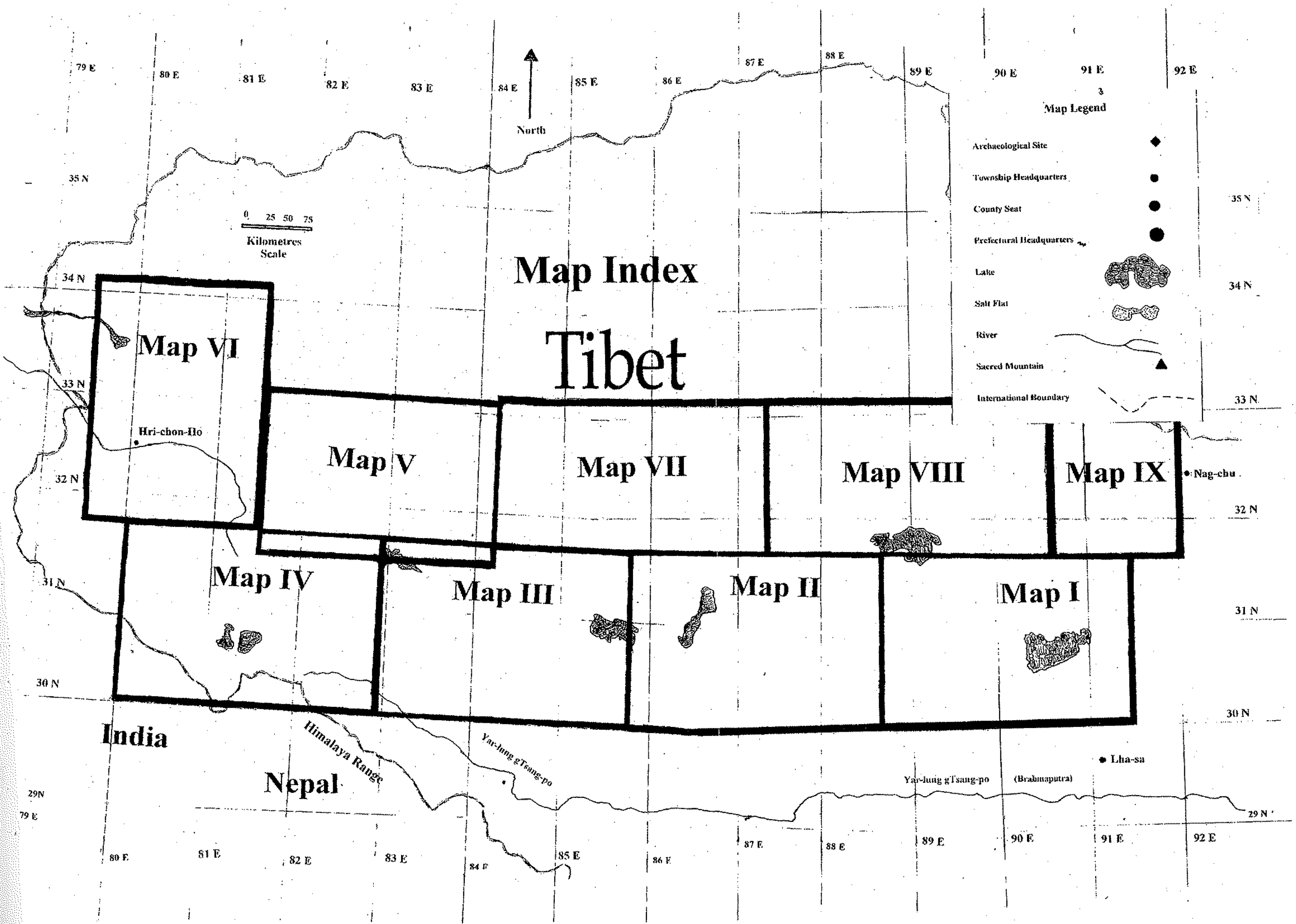




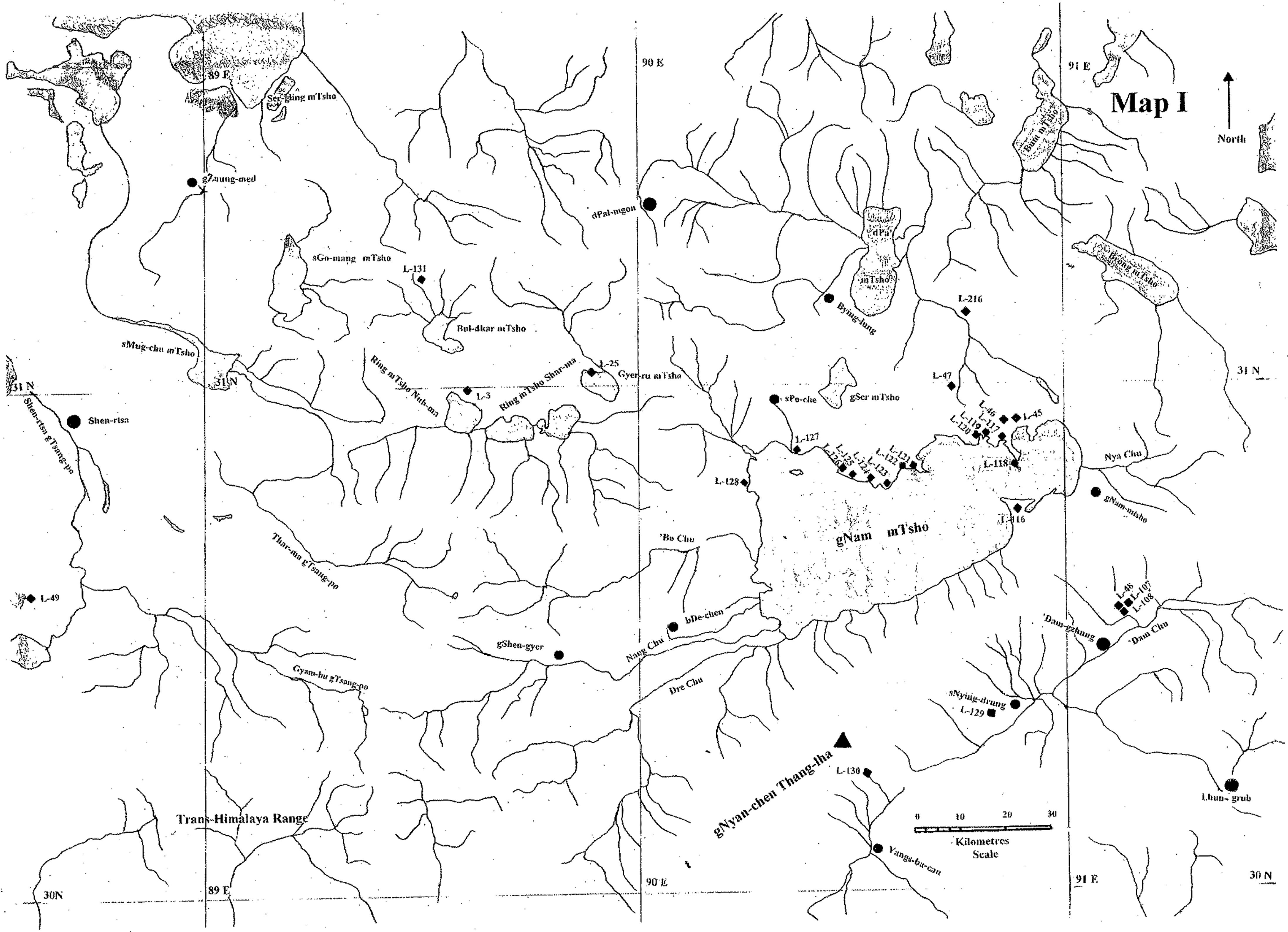
XI-6I : A pair of combating figures.

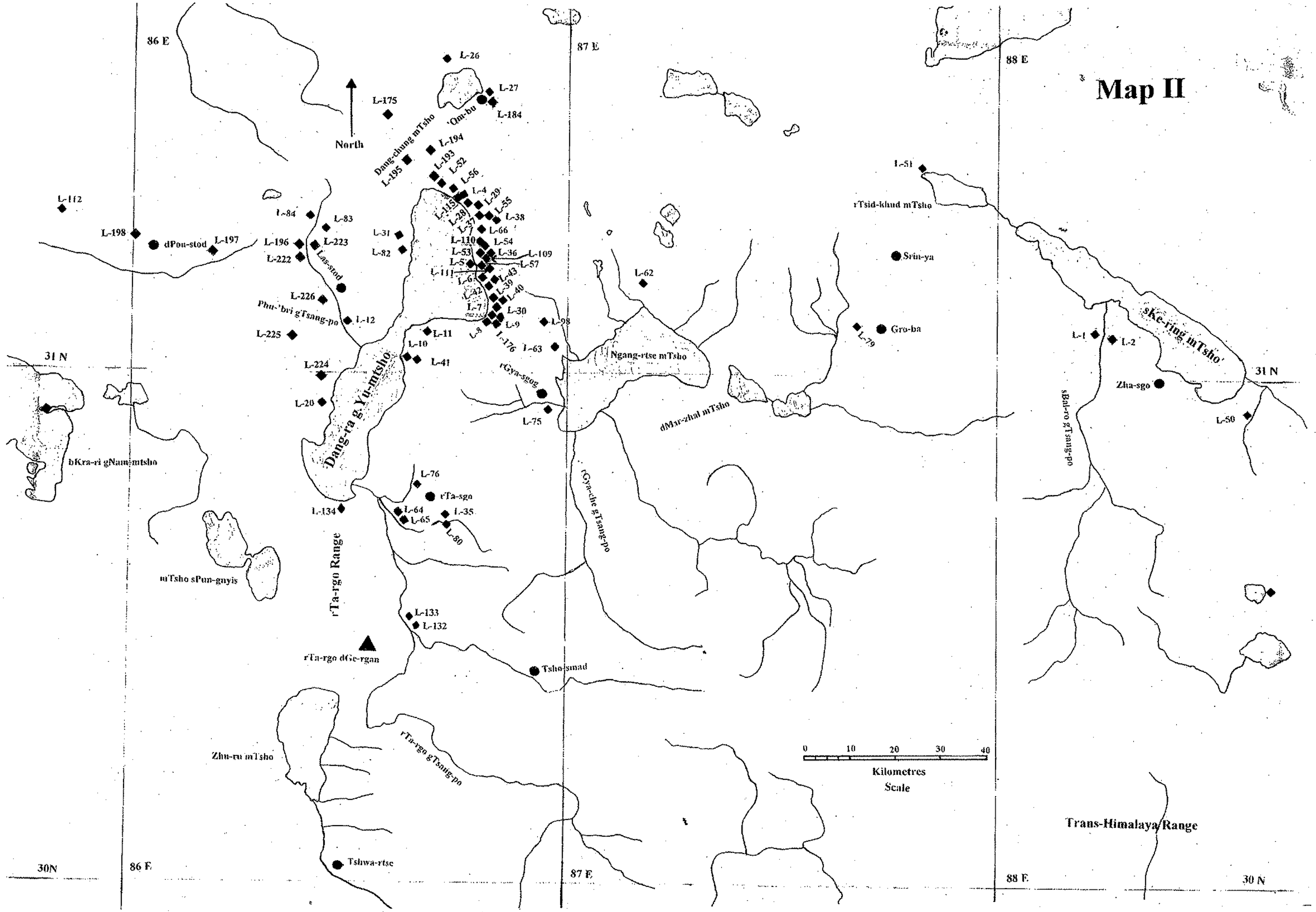
XI-7I : A pair of combating figures.



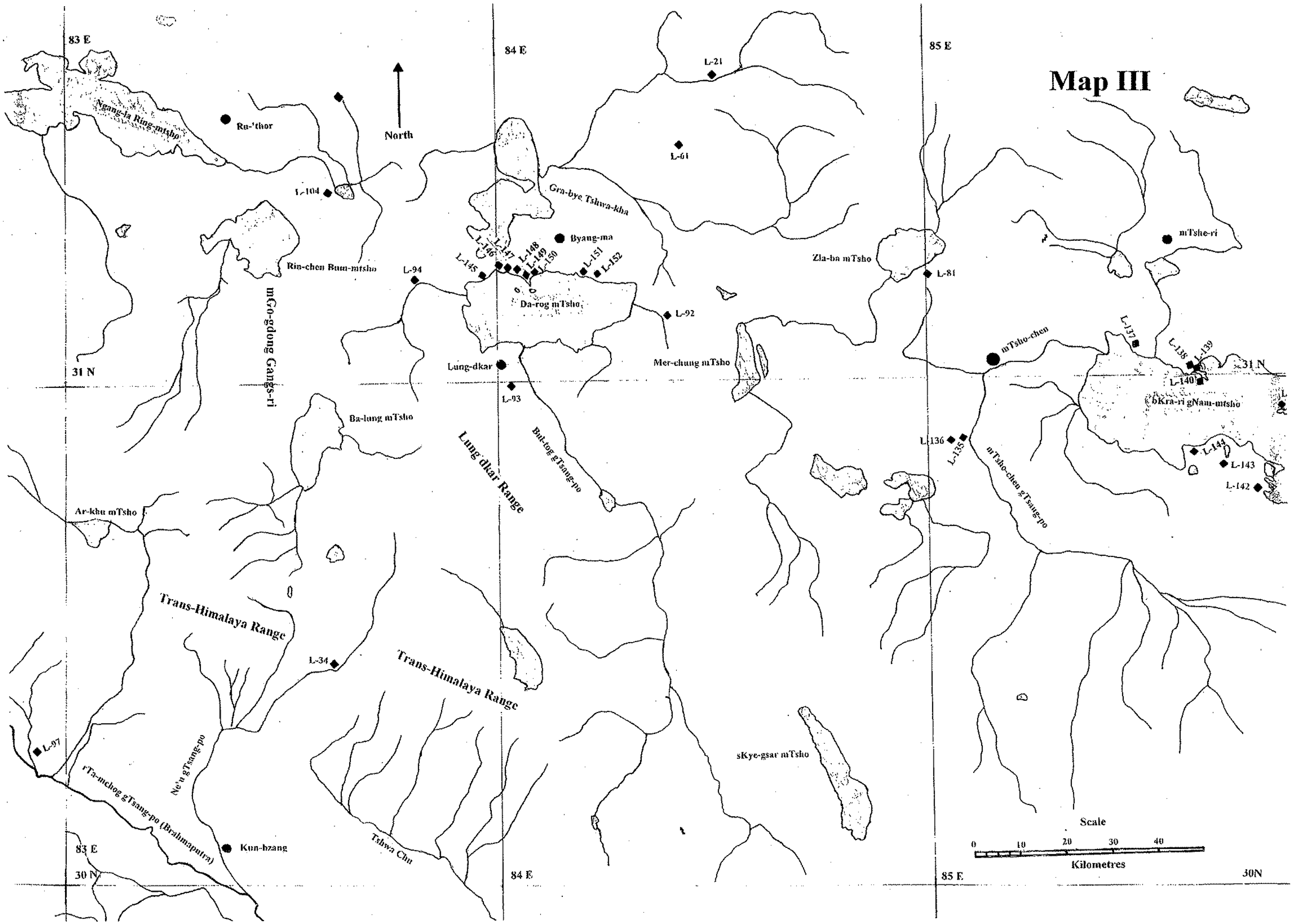


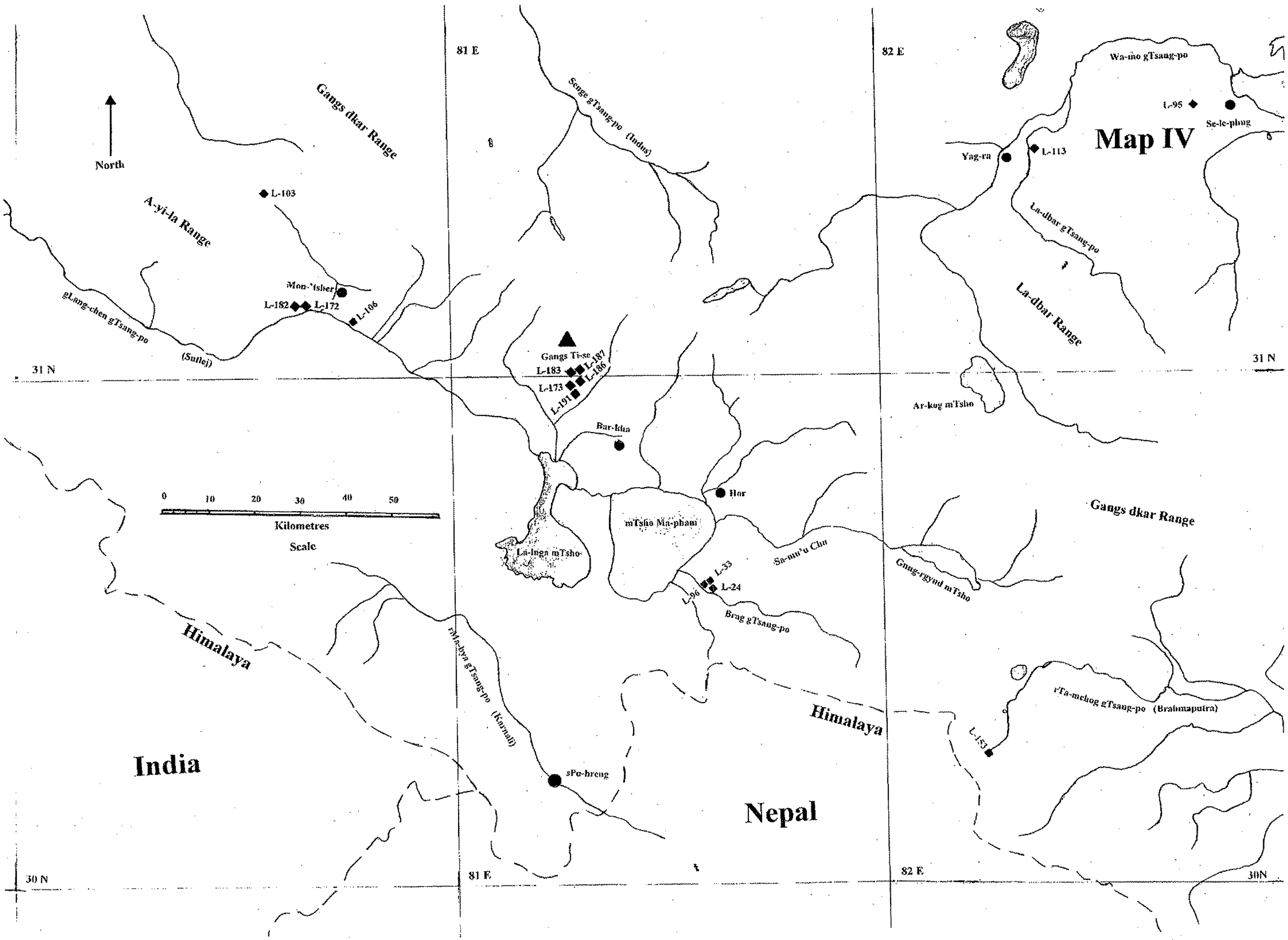
Map Index
Tibet
North
0 25 50 75
Kilometres
Scale
Map Legend
Archaeological Site
Township Headquarters
County Seat
Prefectural Headquarters
Lake
Salt Flat
River
Sacred Mountain
International Boundary
Map I
Map II
Map III
Map IV
Map V
Map VI
Map VII
Map VIII
Map IX
Hri-chon-Ho
Nag-chu
Lha-sa
India
Nepal
Himalaya Range
Yar-lung gTsang-po
Yar-lung gTsang-po
(Brahmaputra)
79 E
80 E
81 E
82 E
83 E
84 E
85 E
86 E
87 E
88 E
89 E
90 E
91 E
92 E
35 N
34 N
33 N
32 N
31 N
30 N
29N
29 N

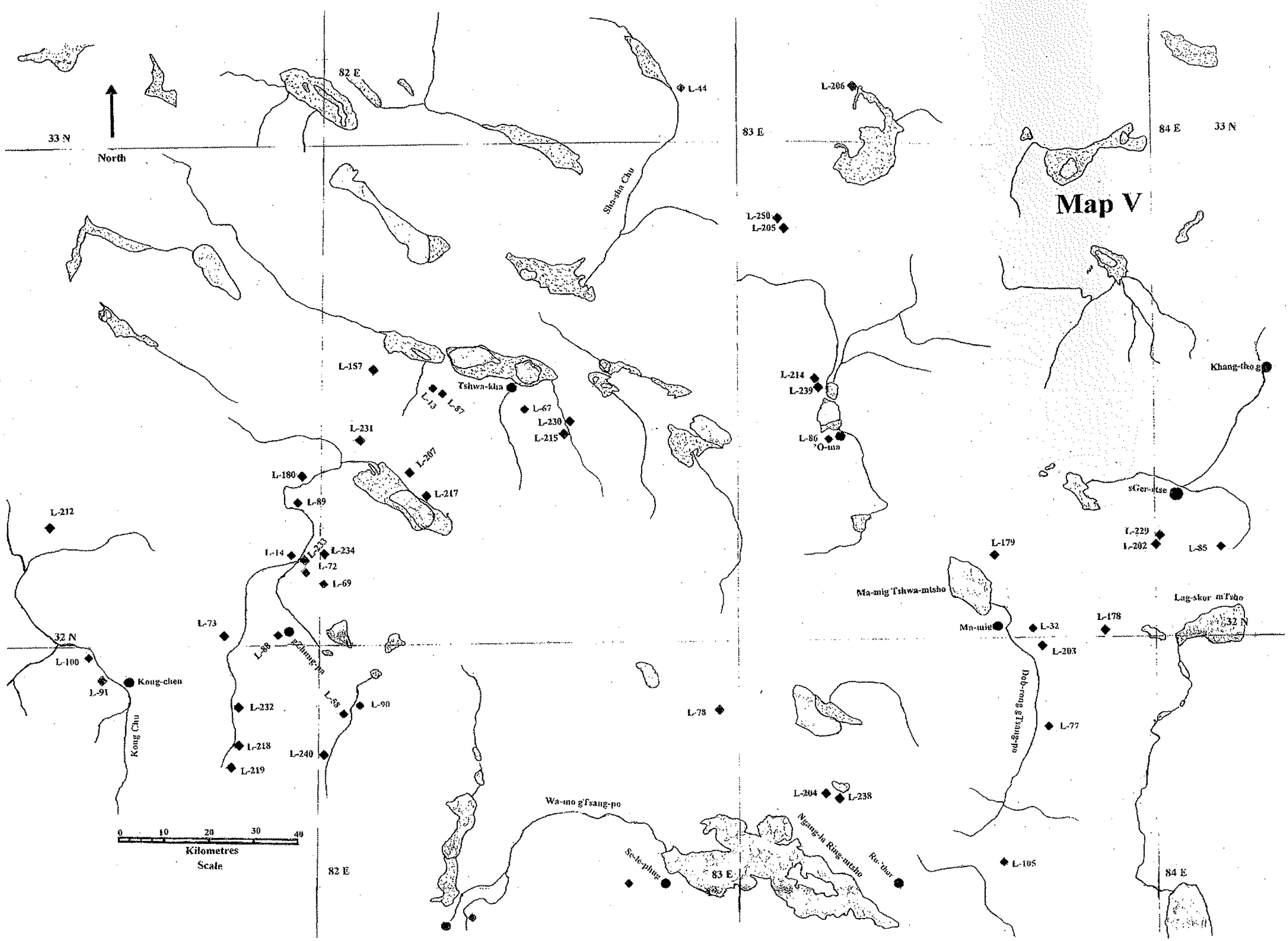

Map I
North
89 E
90 E
91 E
31 N
30N
30 N
Ser-gling mTsho
gZhung-med
dPal-mgon
sGo-mang mTsho
L-131
Bul-dkar mTsho
sMug-chu mTsho
Ring mTsho Nub-ma
Ring mTsho Shar-ma
L-3
L-25
Gyer-ru mTsho
Shen-rtsa
Shen-rtsa gTsang-po
dPa' mTsho
Bying-lung
L-216
Bum mTsho
Brong mTsho
L-47
sPo-che
gSer mTsho
L-46
L-45
L-117
L-119
L-120
L-127
L-125
L-126
L-124
L-123
L-122
L-121
L-118
L-128
L-116
Nya Chu
gNam-mtsho
gNam mTsho
'Bo Chu
Thar-ma gTsang-po
L-49
L-48
L-107
L-108
bDe-chen
'Dam-gzhung
'Dam Chu
gShen-gyer
Nang Chu
Gyam-bu gTsang-po
Dre Chu
sNying-drung
L-129
gNyan-chen Thang-lha
L-130
Lhun-grub
0 10 20 30
Kilometres
Scale
Yangs-ba-can
Trans-Himalaya Range



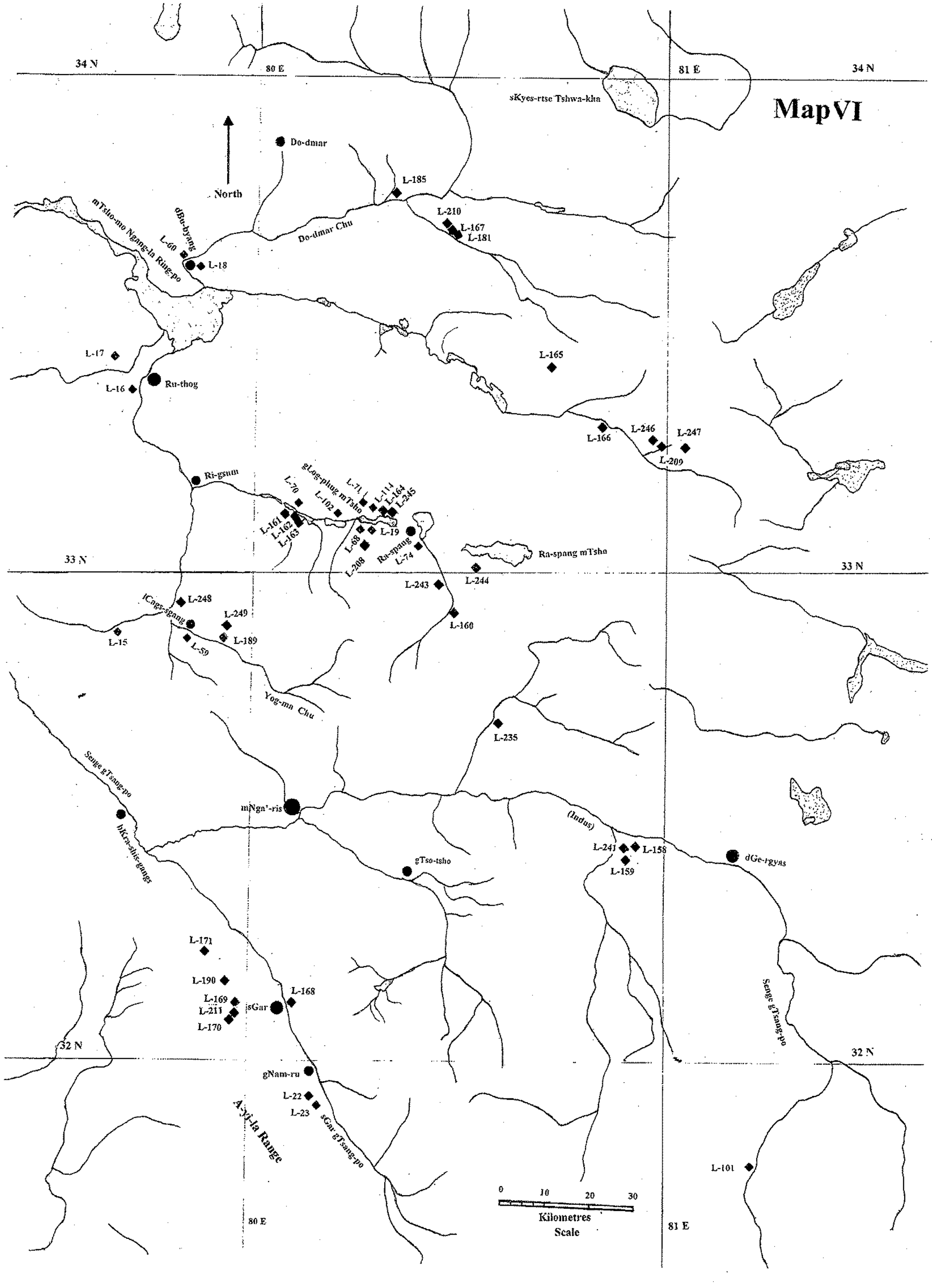
Map II
North
86 E
87 E
88 E
31 N
30N
30 N
86 E
87 E
88 E
L-26
L-27
'Om-bu
L-184
L-175
Dang-chung mTsho
L-194
L-195
L-193
L-52
L-56
L-4
L-29
L-55
L-38
L-115
L-28
L-37
L-66
L-110
L-54
L-53
L-36
L-109
L-57
L-111
L-5
L-43
L-6
L-39
L-40
L-42
L-7
L-30
L-8
L-9
L-176
L-98
L-63
L-31
L-82
L-112
L-198
dPon-stod
L-197
L-84
L-83
L-196
L-223
L-222
Las-stod
L-226
Phu-'bri gTsang-po
L-12
L-225
L-11
L-10
L-41
L-224
L-20
Dang-ra g.Yu-mtsho
rGya-sgog
L-75
bKra-ri gNam-mtsho
L-76
rTa-sgo
L-64
L-35
L-65
L-80
L-134
rTa-rgo Range
mTsho sPun-gnyis
L-133
L-132
rTa-rgo dGe-rgan
Tsho-smad
Zhu-ru mTsho
rTa-rgo gTsang-po
Tshwa-rtse
L-62
Ngang-rtse mTsho
dMar-zhal mTsho
rGya-che gTsang-po
L-51
rTsid-khud mTsho
Srin-ya
Gro-ba
L-79
sKe-ring mTsho
L-1
L-2
Zha-sgo
L-50
sBal-ro gTsang-po
0
10
20
30
40
Kilometres
Scale
Trans-Himalaya Range

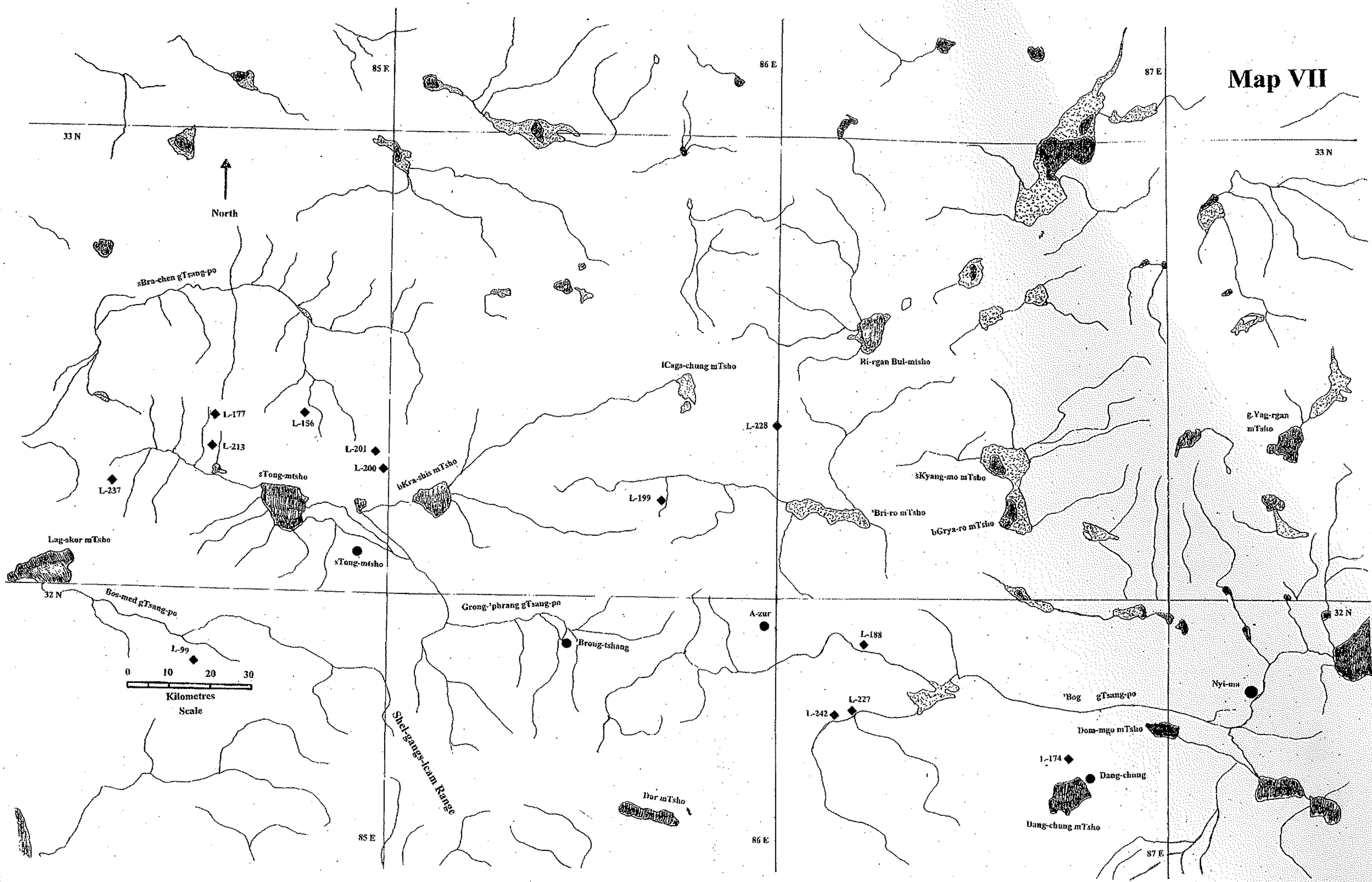

Map III
North
83 E
84 E
85 E
31 N
30 N
30N
Ngang-la Ring-mtsho
Ru-'thor
L-104
Rin-chen Bum-mtsho
mGo-gdong Gangs-ri
L-94
L-145
L-146
L-147
L-148
L-149
L-150
L-151
L-152
Gra-bye Tshwa-kha
Byang-ma
Da-rog mTsho
L-21
L-61
L-92
Zla-ba mTsho
L-81
Mer-chung mTsho
Lung-dkar
L-93
Ba-lung mTsho
Lung dkar Range
But-tog gTsang-po
Ar-khu mTsho
Trans-Himalaya Range
L-34
L-97
rTa-mchog gTsang-po (Brahmaputra)
Ne'u gTsang-po
Kun-bzang
Tshwa Chu
sKye-gsar mTsho
mTshe-ri
mTsho-chen
L-137
L-138
L-139
L-140
bKra-ri gNam-mtsho
L-136
L-135
mTsho-chen gTsang-po
L-144
L-143
L-142
Scale
0
10
20
30
40
Kilometres

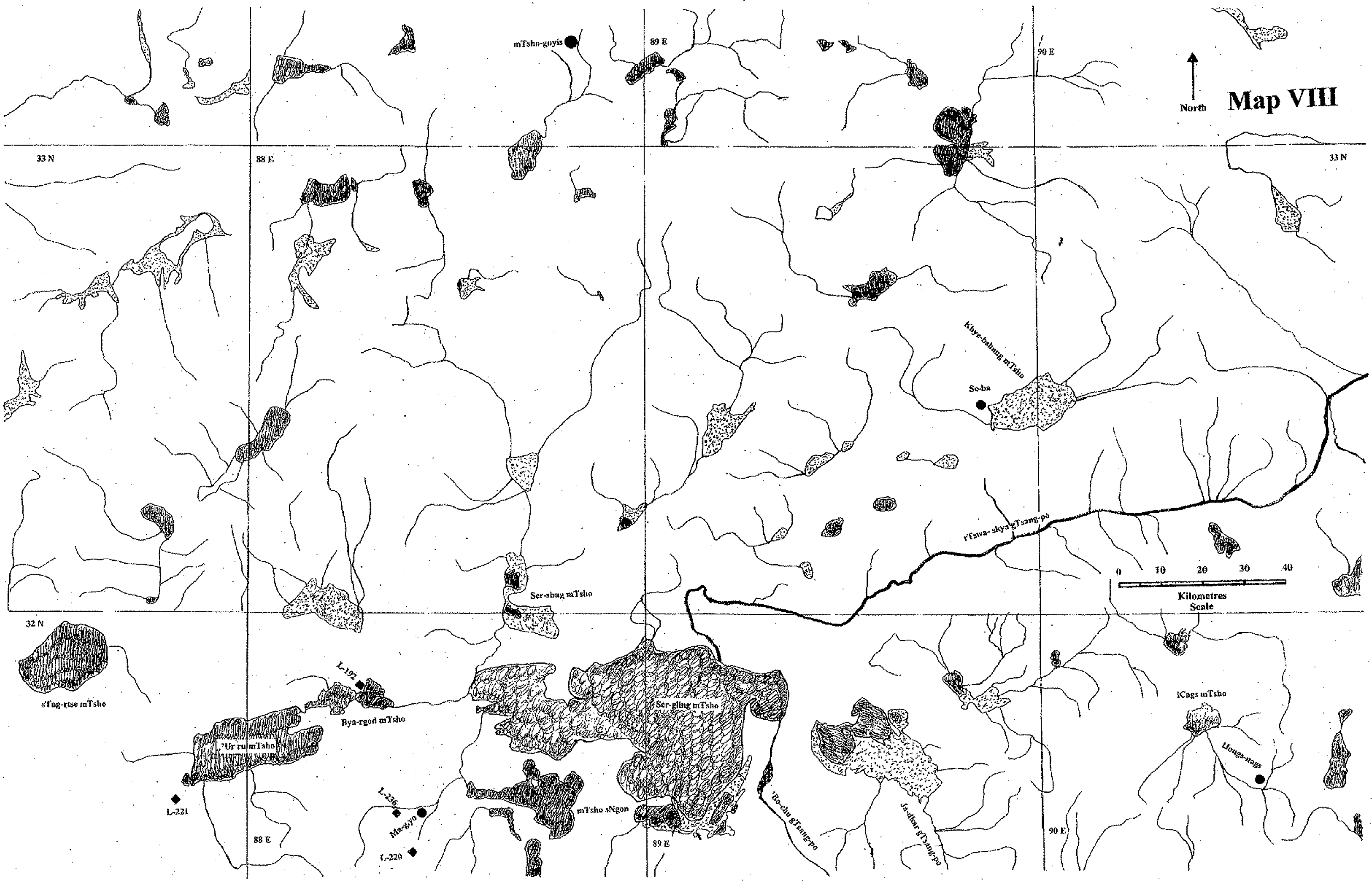

Map IV
North
81 E
82 E
31 N
30 N
Gangs dkar Range
A-yi-la Range
Senge gTsang-po (Indus)
Wa-mo gTsang-po
L-95
Se-le-phug
Yag-ra
L-113
La-dbar gTsang-po
La-dbar Range
L-103
Mon-'tsher
L-182
L-172
L-106
gLang-chen gTsang-po
(Sutlej)
Gangs Ti-se
L-183
L-187
L-186
L-173
L-191
Bar-kha
Ar-kog mTsho
Hor
mTsho Ma-pham
La-lnga mTsho
Sa-mu'u Chu
Gung-rgyud mTsho
L-33
L-24
L-96
Brag gTsang-po
0 10 20 30 40 50
Kilometres
Scale
Himalaya
rMa-bya gTsang-po (Karnali)
sPu-hreng
India
Nepal
rTa-mchog gTsang-po (Brahmaputra)
L-153
30N


Map V
North
33 N
82 E
83 E
84 E
32 N
L-44
L-206
L-250
L-205
Sha-sha Chu
L-157
Tshwa-kha
L-13
L-87
L-67
L-230
L-215
L-231
L-207
L-217
L-180
L-89
L-212
L-14
L-233
L-234
L-72
L-69
L-73
L-88
gZhung-pa
L-100
L-91
Kong-chen
Kong Chu
L-232
L-218
L-219
L-58
L-90
L-240
L-214
L-239
L-86
'O-ma
Khang-tho
sGer-rtse
L-229
L-202
L-85
L-179
Ma-mig Tshwa-mtsho
Ma-mig
L-32
L-203
L-178
Lag-skor mTsho
L-77
Dob-rong gTsang-po
L-78
L-204
L-238
Wa-mo gTsang-po
Se-le-phug
Ngang-la Ring-mtsho
L-105
0
10
20
30
40
Kilometres
Scale

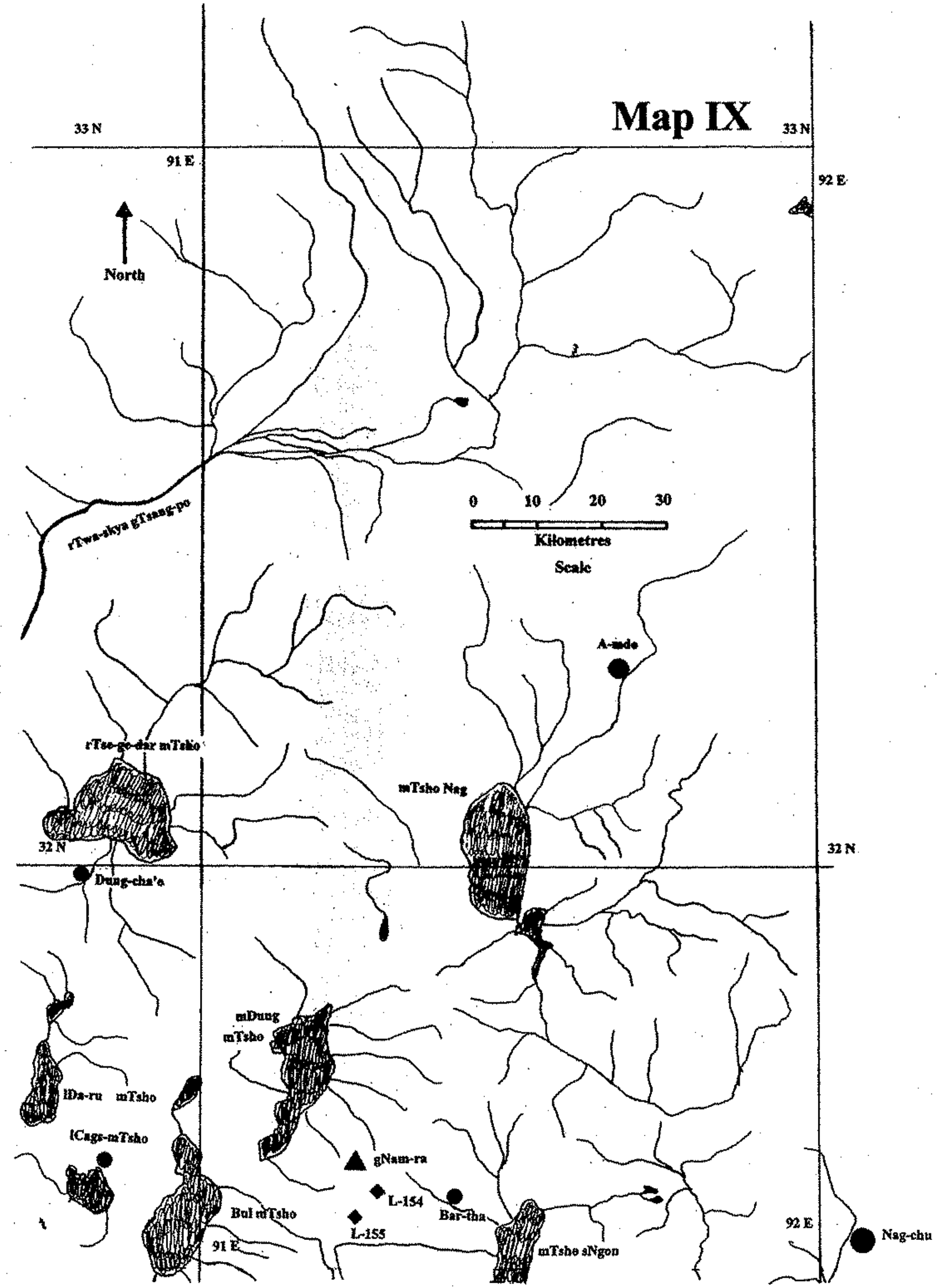
MapVI


34 N
80 E
81 E
34 N
sKyes-rtse Tshwa-kha
North
Do-dmar
L-185
L-210
L-167
L-181
Do-dmar Chu
dBu-byang
mTsho-mo Ngang-la Ring-po
L-60
L-18
L-17
L-165
L-16
Ru-thog
L-166
L-246
L-247
L-209
Ri-gsum
gLog-phug mTsho
L-70
L-71
L-114
L-164
L-245
L-102
L-161
L-162
L-163
L-68
L-19
L-208
Ra-spang
L-74
Ra-spang mTsho
33 N
33 N
L-244
L-243
L-248
lCags-sgang
L-249
L-189
L-15
L-59
L-160
Yog-mn Chu
L-235
Senge gTsang-po
mNga'-ris
(Indus)
bKra-shis-gangs
L-241
L-158
L-159
dGe-rgyas
gTso-tsho
L-171
L-190
L-169
L-211
L-170
sGar
L-168
32 N
32 N
gNam-ru
L-22
L-23
A-yi-la Range
sGar gTsang-po
L-101
0
10
20
30
Kilometres
Scale
80 E
81 E

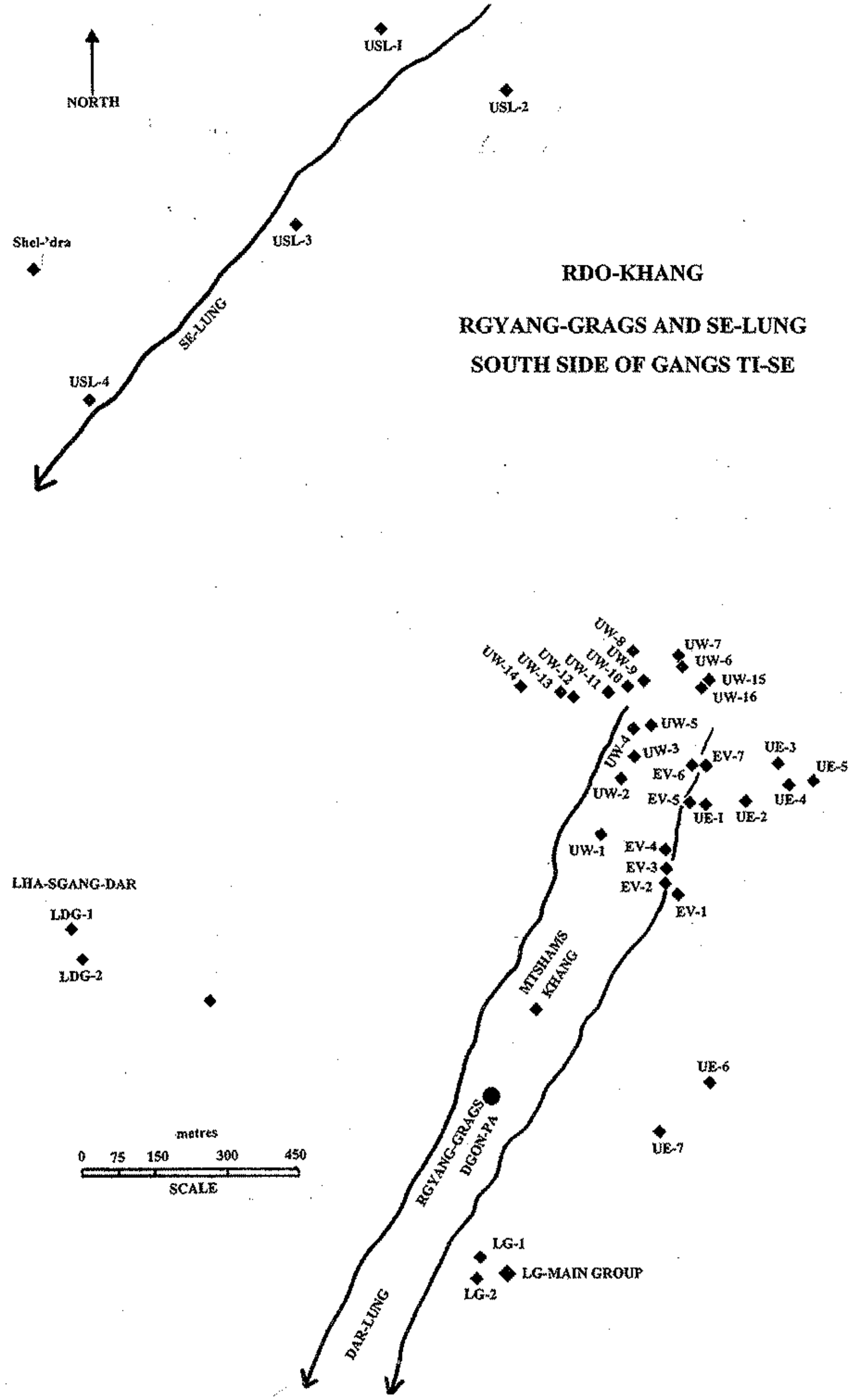

Map VII
85 E
86 E
87 E
33 N
32 N
North
sBra-chen gTsang-po
L-177
L-156
L-213
L-201
L-200
L-237
sTong-mtsho
bKra-shis mTsho
Lag-skor mTsho
sTong-mtsho
Bos-med gTsang-po
L-99
0 10 20 30
Kilometres
Scale
Grong-'phrang gTsang-po
'Brong-tshang
Shel-gangs-lcam Range
lCags-chung mTsho
L-228
L-199
A-zur
L-188
L-227
L-242
Dar mTsho
Ri-rgan Bul-mtsho
sKyang-mo mTsho
'Bri-ro mTsho
bGrya-ro mTsho
g.Yag-rgan
mTsho
'Bog gTsang-po
Nyi-ma
Dom-mgo mTsho
L-174
Dang-chung
Dang-chung mTsho



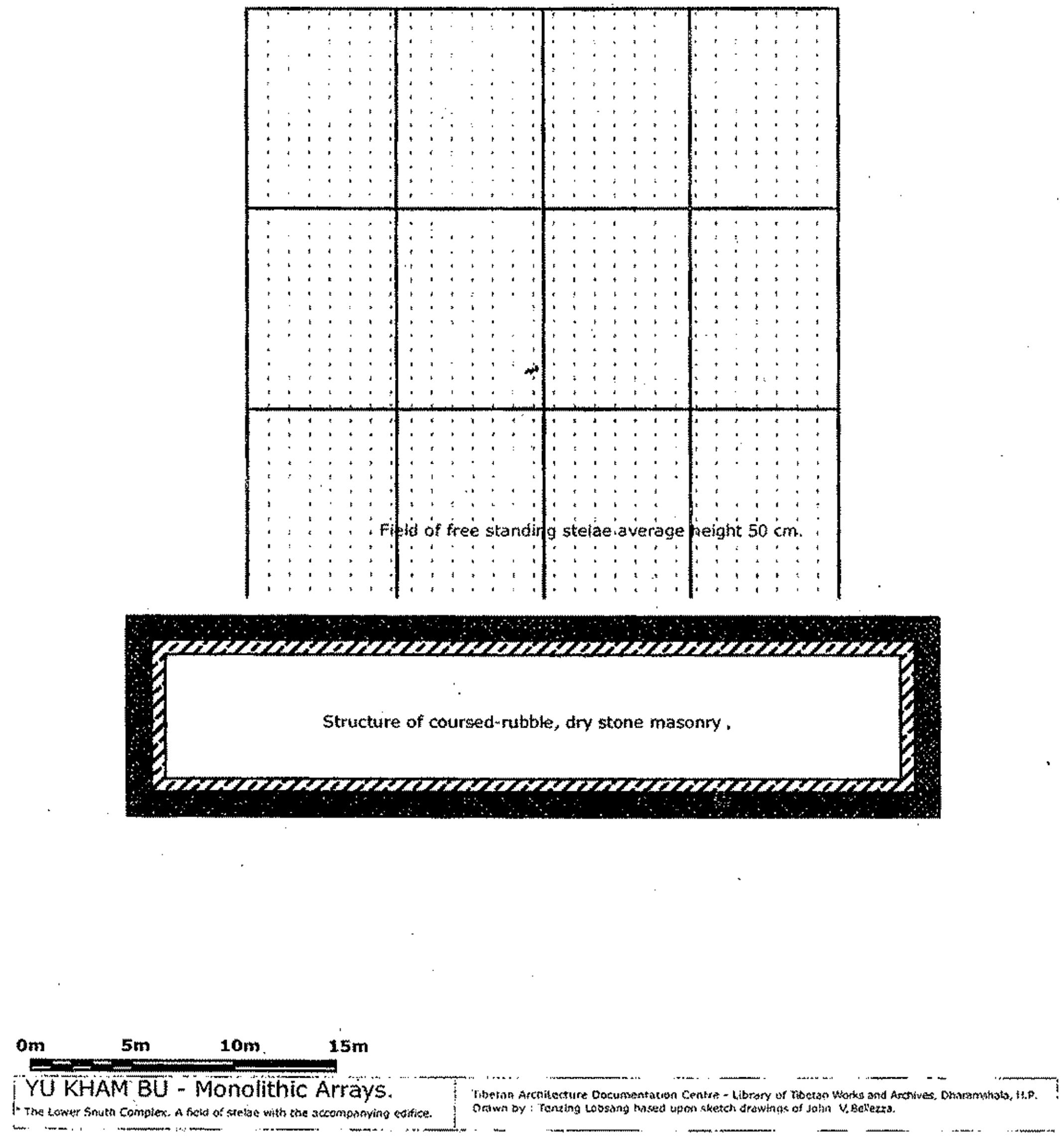
Map VIII
North
mTsho-gnyis
89 E
90 E
33 N
88 E
33 N
Khye-bsbang mTsho
Se-ba
rTswa- skya gTsang-po
0 10 20 30 40
Kilometres
Scale
Ser-sbug mTsho
32 N
sTag-rtse mTsho
L-192
Bya-rgod mTsho
Ser-gling mTsho
'Ur ru mTsho
L-221
88 E
L-236
Ma-g.yo
L-220
mTsho sNgon
89 E
'Bo-chu gTsang-po
Ja-dkar gTsang-po
lCags mTsho
90 E



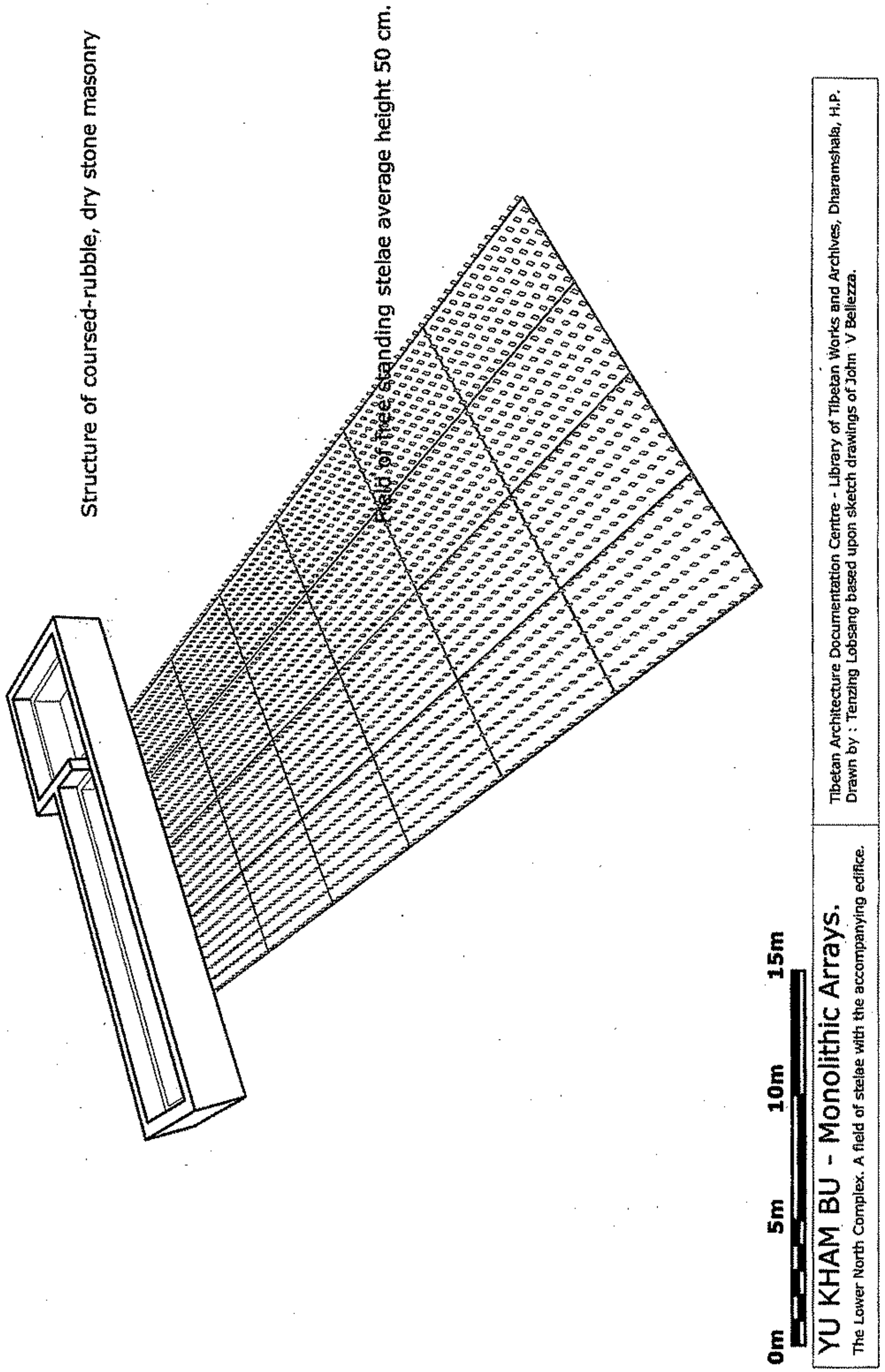
Map IX : (Northeast Byang thang)



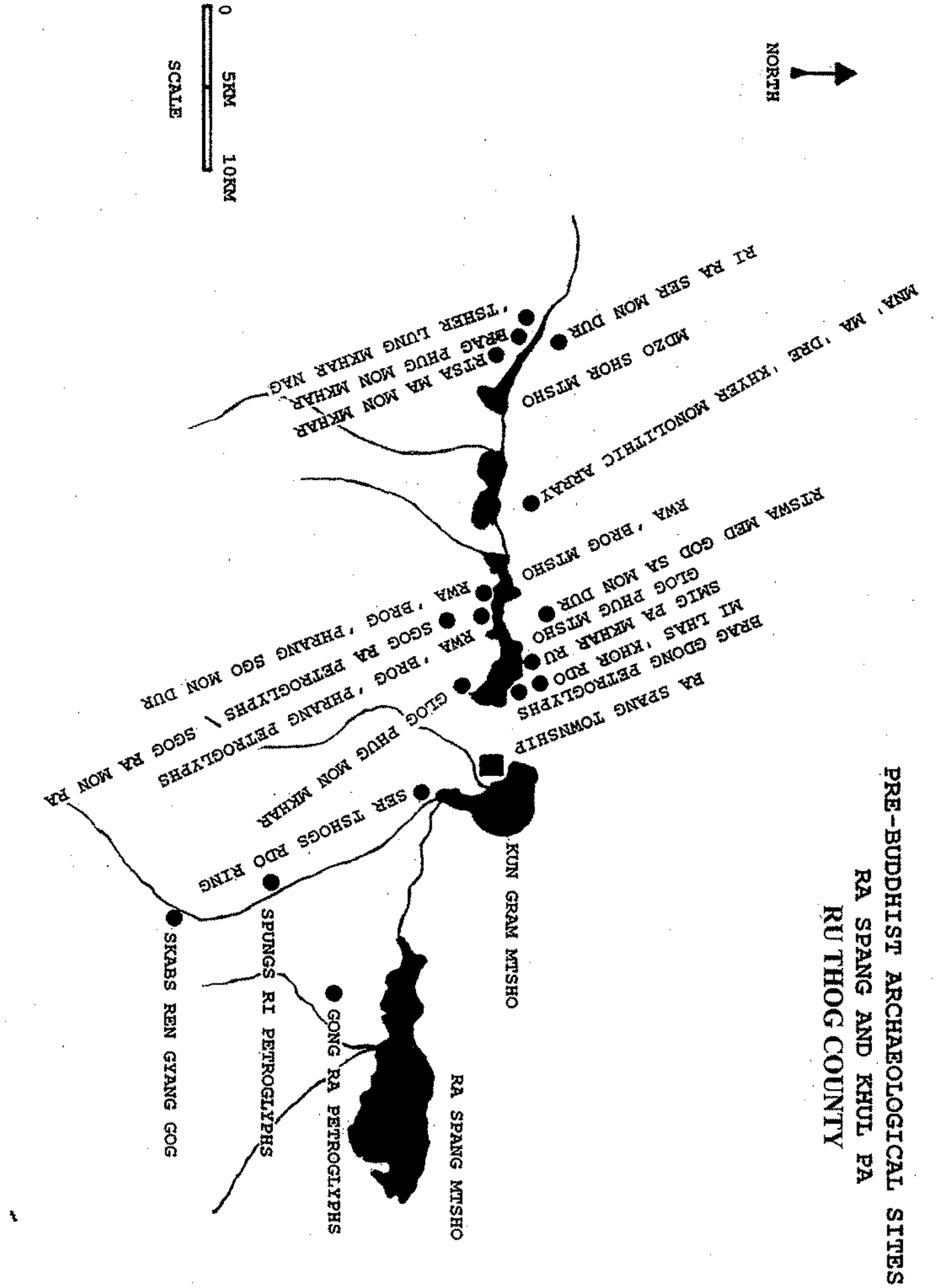
rDo khang of rGyang grags and Se lung



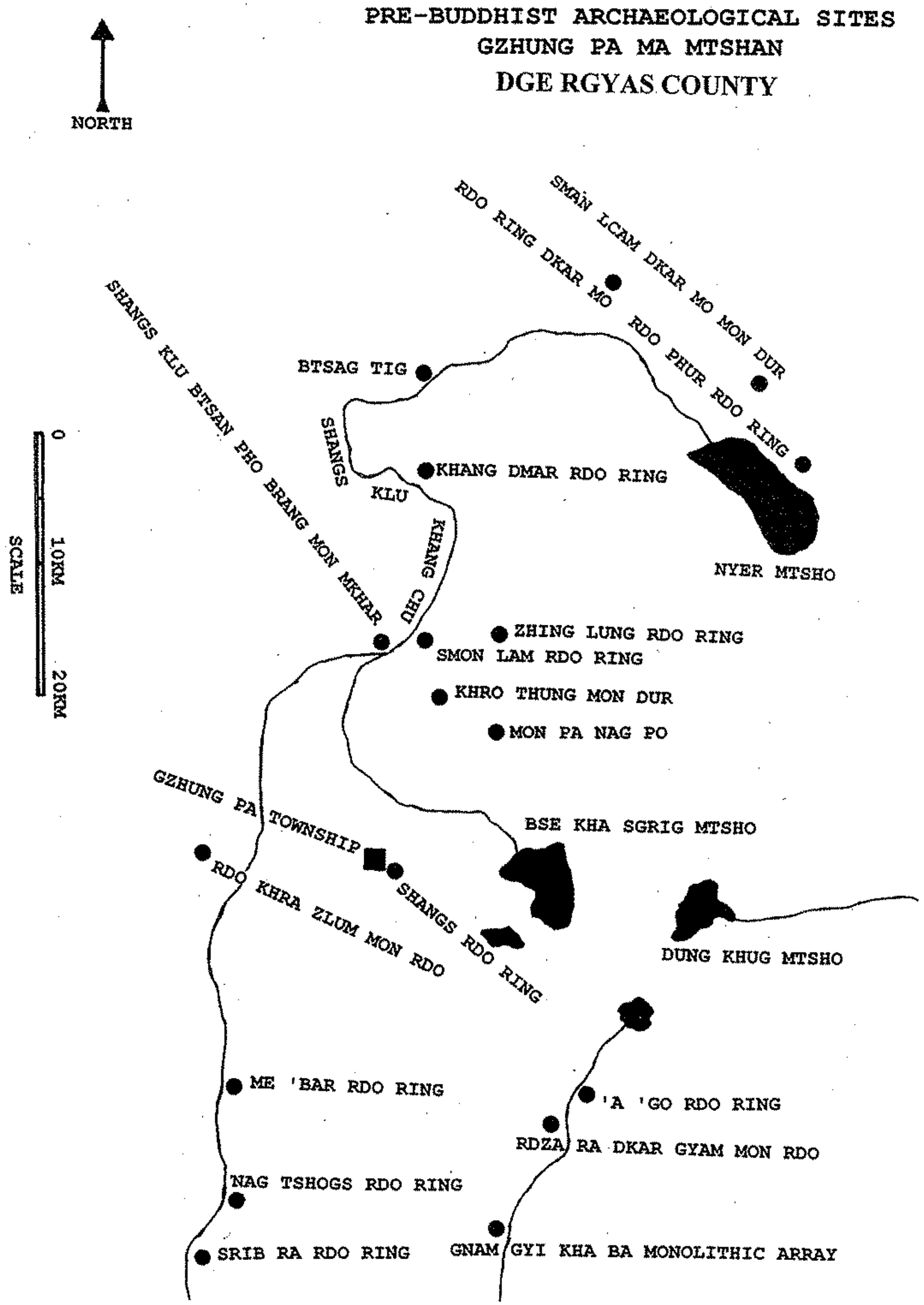
Monolithic Array - conjectural reconstruction of plan



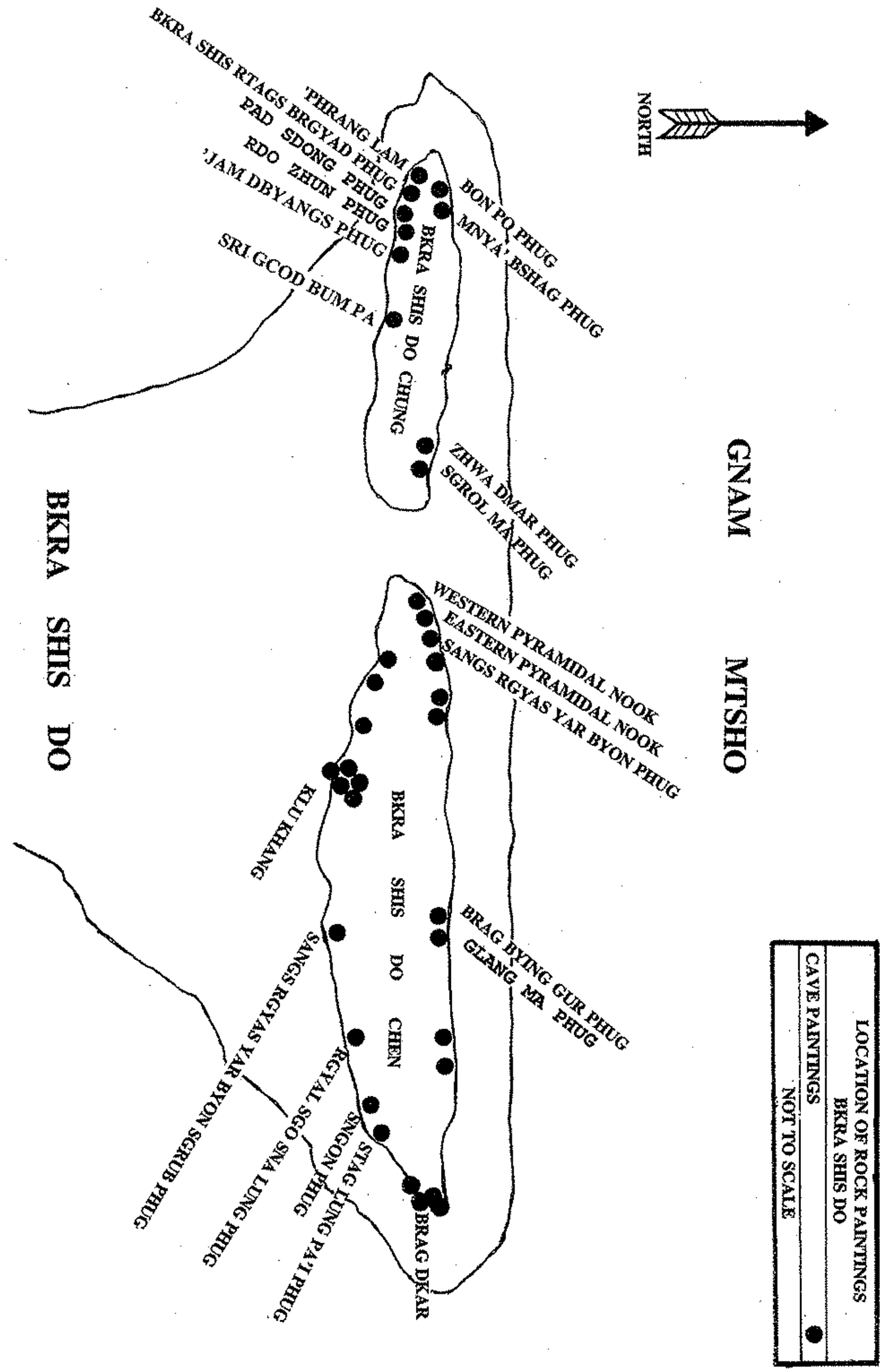
Monolithic Array - conjectural three dimensional reconstruction



Pre-Buddhist Archaeological sites of Ra spang and Khul pa



Pre-Buddhist Archaeological Sites of gZhung pa Ma mtshan



Rock Paintings of bKra shis Do

Conclusion

This monograph has described the morphological, cultural and archaeological characteristics of around 100 pre-Buddhist archaeological sites documented on the author's Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition. It also brings forth new evidence about the cultural entity associated with many of these sites and which is called Zhang-zhung-Mon in the literary and oral traditions of the region. This inventory of ancient sites is but an incremental step in the comprehensive documentation of pre-Buddhist archaeological sites in Upper Tibet, an endeavor that will require many years and much expertise to satisfactorily execute. As soon as possible, specialists from diverse fields must be inducted into this line of inquiry if we are to answer fundamental questions pertaining to chronology, cultural affinities, ethnohistory, and the role of climate in the development and demise of pre-Buddhist civilization in Upper Tibet. It is with such intention that this inventory has been compiled, as but another stepping stone in the elucidation of a field with tremendous promise.

The very fact that so many monuments belonging to an earlier epoch in the development of the region have survived, raises questions as to the true significance of Tibetan historical and quasi-historical references, particularly those of the Bon tradition. As the pace of both textual and archaeological researches pick up, we will augment our appreciation of the degree of recognition regarding their ancient past that Tibetans have actually preserved in their literary and oral traditions. Conversely, as the remarkable extent of pre-Buddhist cultural achievements emerge, we will come to better assess how historical Buddhist civilization overlaid and assimilated its earlier counterpart.

On a more immediate level, this inventory of pre-Buddhist sites in no uncertain terms announces to the scholarly community and other concerned parties that Tibet's ancient heritage is threatened by ignorance of its intrinsic scientific value. Nevertheless, we can be hopeful that Tibetans' own faith and abidance in their culture and way of life will soon spur a new appreciation of pre-Buddhist heritage, most importantly, as a means to further define and affirm their unique identity. The academic community and their representative societies and governments have an essential role to play in this process, firstly by conducting the requisite scientific research, and secondly by applying it to facilitate a deeper understanding of human history.

Names and Map Locations of Archaeological Sites Surveyed by the Author to Date

(L = location; M = Map)

Type-I: Hilltop forts, palaces and other edifices built on summits

(L-1; M-II)	rDzong Ser
(L-2; M-II)	rDzong Nag
(L-3; M-I)	Sha ba Brag
(L-4; M-II)	'Om bu rDzong
(L-5; M-II)	Khyung rDzong
(L-6; M-II)	Gyam pa'i rDzong
(L-7; M-II)	Ar po rDzong
(L-8; M-II)	Brag chung dBu rtse rDzong
(L-9; M-II)	rGyang pa'i gtsug rDzong
(L-10; M-II)	Phyug tsho Grog po rDzong
(L-11; M-II)	Tsan rag
(L-12; M-II)	Ser mDzod rDzong
(L-13; M-V)	Zhing chen Mon mKhar
(L-14; M-V)	Shangs Klu Pho brang Mon mKhar
(L-15; M-VI)	Nya chu rDzong dkar
(L-16; M-VI)	Khu rang mKhar gog
(L-17; M-VI)	Ru thog bShan pa'i mKhar
(L-18; M-VI)	Brag gdong
(L-19; M-VI)	Glog phug mKhar
(L-20; M-II)	Hang dal rDzong
(L-21; M-III)	Gra rong Mon rDzong
(L-22; M-VI)	Zhing mkhar mKhar gog
(L-23; M-VI)	A pha 'Dre dkar sPungs pa Mon mKhar
(L-24; M-IV)	Mu ti
(L-120; M-I)	Bra gu rta ra
(L-121; M-I)	rTa mchog ngang pa Do

(L-154; M-IX) sKyes ri Khro bo sTobs rgyal mKhar
(L-155; M-IX) gSham gdong Brag dkar
(L-156; VII) Bis rdza dmag 'thab sa
(L-157; M-V) Mon mkhar Ser nag
(L-158; M-VI) sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog
(L-159; M-VI) Sha ro Mon dur
(L-160; M-VI) sKabs ren Gyang gog
(L-161; M-VI) 'Tsher lung mKhar nag
(L-162; M-VI) Brag phug
(L-163; M-VI) rTsa ma
(L-164; M-VI) sMig pa mKhar ru
(L-165; M-VI) Me long Mon mKhar
(L-166; M-VI) sDings leb sNgon po
(L-167; M-VI) Chu mKhar gyam
(L-168; M-VI) Ping Ser po
(L-169; M-VI) mChong gog Mon mKhar
(L-170; M-VI) Ma lung mKhar
(L-171; M-VI) Ar gog mKhar ru
(L-172; M-IV) Khyung lung dNgul mKhar
(L-173; M-IV) Gangs Ti se'i Bon mKhar

Type-II: Structures, mostly religious, integrating caves and escarpments in their construction

(L-25; M-I) Gyer ru mTsho do
(L-26; M-II) Brag mThu bo che
(L-27; M-II) gNas Kun bzang
(L-28; M-II) Am nag
(L-29; M-II) sGo bdag
(L-30; M-II) Sad ne Ga'u sGrub phug
(L-31; M-II) rDzong dKar po
(L-32; M-V) Ma mig Brag dkar
(L-33; M-IV) Chu Phug
(L-34; M-III) sTag rong
(L-125: M-I) Bya Do
(L-145; M-III) Do gyi phug
(L-146; M-III) Lha khang dMar chag
(L-147; M-III) 'Phrang lam
(L-148; M-III) Sha ba gdong Lha khang
(L-174; M-VII) sKyid phug bSam gtan Gling.
(L-175; M-II) sTag Brag khung
(L-176; M-II) Lha lung Brag dkar gSang ba'i gnas
(L-177; M-VII) rDzong dKar po
(L-178; M-V) Brag 'khor sgang

(L-179; M-V) Ma mig Brag dkar
(L-180; M-V) bTsag tig
(L-181; M-VI) Chu mKhar Gyam sGrub phug
(L-182; M-IV) Gu ru Gyam dGon pa
(L-183; M-IV) Shel 'dra

Type-III: Free-standing religious structures

(L-35; M-II) rDo rang
(L-36; M-II) Ba'am dGon gtag
(L-37; M-II) sGo po rNams gsum
(L-38; M-II) dGon gtag gTag mgo
(L-39; M-II) g.Yung drung Brag rtse
(L-40; M-II) Lha lung Brag dkar
(L-41; M-II) Phyug tsho Grog po dGon pa
(L-42; M-II) Rwa skye Brag
(L-43; M-II) dGos 'dod Brag khung
(L-44; M-V) Sha sha dPal khang
(L-117; M-I) Sha Do
(L-118; M-I) rDo ring.
(L-119; M-I) sNying Do
(L-153; M-IV) rTa mchog kha 'bab
(L-184; M-II) sMon lam rDzong
(L-185; M-VI) Gog rtse Khang dmar
(L-186; M-IV) rGyang grags rDo khang
(L-187; M-IV) Se lung rDo khang

Type-IV: Remains of Sedentary villages

(L-45; M-I) Srib La
(L-46; M-I) gSer Nya
(L-47; M-I) A chog
(L-48; M-I) sKye Lung
(L-49; M-I) Do mKhar mgo
(L-50; M-II) sTag Lung
(L-51; M-II) mChod rten brGya ba
(L-52; M-II) 'Phong chen
(L-53; M-II) Ba'am Khang khrog
(L-54; M-II) Dar chen Khang khrog
(L-55; M-II) dMar lCam
(L-56; M-II) 'Om mo
(L-57; M-II) Sog po
(L-58; M-V) rDza ra dKar gyam Mon rdo
(L-59; M-VI) rDo po Rag
(L-60; M-VI) Za za

(L-61; M-III)	'Bur dkar
(L-124; M-I)	Lug Do
(L-134; M-II)	Gangs lung Lha rtse
(L-138; M-III)	mThong sgrol Brag
(L-139; M-III)	sPos do Gong ma
(L-140; M-III)	sPos do Shar ma
(L-141; M-III)	Do Dril bu
(L-142; M-III)	Mon ra near Nyi lung
(L-144; M-III	rDo dmar Khang ro
(L-149; M-III)	Big peninsula near sLe dmar chang
(L-150; M-III)	Small peninsula near sLe dmar chang
(L-151; M-III)	Tsam do dMar ri
(L-188; M-VII)	Khri gZhung
(L-189; M-VI)	Khog ra
(L-190; M-VI)	Zhing ka gong
(L-191; M-IV)	mChod rten Gong bzang

Type-V: Graves with superficial superstructures of all types

(L-62; M-II)	Mon pa'i Dur khung
(L-63; M-II)	Khog ro
(L-64; M-II)	rTsid ra Mon dur
(L-65; M-II)	Brag dkar nag sDings
(L-66; M-II)	Dar chung Mon dur
(L-67; M-V)	Tshwa kha Mon khang
(L-68; M-VI)	Rwa 'brog 'Phrang sgo Mon dur
(L-137; M-III)	Glang ri Grags dmar
(L-143; M-III)	Mon ra near sTag stong Lho ma
(L-192; M-II)	Lug rdo sPungs lhas Mon ra
(L-193; M-II)	rNya la sNgo ril Mon dur
(L-194; M-II)	Chabs thog Mon dur khung
(L-195; M-II)	Gram phyag Mon dur khung
(L-196; M-II)	Mon ra Yar skyed
(L-197; M-II)	rGod tshang
(L-198; M-II)	Lu ma dKar mo Mon dur
(L-199; M-VII)	'Khar sgong Mon ra
(L-200; M-VII)	Khrog lam Mon ra
(L-201; M-VII)	Gu ru Rin po che sGrub phug Mon ro
(L-202; M-V)	Sag the Mon ro
(L-203; M-V)	rDo ra sKya kyog
(L-204; M-V)	'Dzog gdong Mon dur
(L-205; M-V)	Ri rgyal Mon dur
(L-206; M-V)	Shen chen Mon dur
(L-207; M-V)	sMan lcam dKar mo Mon dur

(L-208; M-VI)	sGog ra Mon ra
(L-209; M-VI)	Brag lung Nub ma Mon dur
(L-210; M-VI)	Chu mKhar Gyam
(L-211; M-VI)	Thar lcang Mon dur
(L-212; M-VI)	'Or mo sgang Mon dur

Type-VI: Cubic-shaped graves built on summits

(L-69; M-V)	Mon pa Nag po
(L-70; M-VI)	Ri ra ser Mon dur
(L-71; M-VI)	rTwa med God sa Mon dur
(L-72; M-V)	Khro thung Mon dur
(L-73; M-V)	rDo khra zlum Mon rdo
(L-205; M-V)	Ri rgyal Mon dur
(L-213; M-VII)	dGe lhas mGo dkar Mon dur
(L-214; M-V)	rTa nu Mon dur
(L-215; M-V)	Na ma lung Mon khang

Type-VII: Isolated pillars

(L-74; M-VI)	Ser Tshogs rDo ring
(L-75; M-II)	Blon po rDo ring
(L-76; M-II)	Bsle Kham pa rDo ring
(L-77; M-V)	Shar sha rDo ring
(L-78; M-V)	Seng 'khor Byang ma rDo ring
(L-133; M-II)	Lug tug 'phrang
(L-216; M-I)	rDo ring sPun gsum
(L-217; M-V)	rDo phur
(L-218; M-V)	Nag tshogs rDo ring
(L-219; M-V)	Srib ra rDo ring

Type-VIII: Stelae built inside a rectangular enclosure

(L-79; M-II)	Kya rDzong rDo ring
(L-80; M-II)	rDo rang
(L-81; M-III)	Phe lung rDo ring
(L-82; M-II)	Mon ra Yar gan
(L-83; M-II)	Mon ra'i rDo ring
(L-84; M-II)	Lam lung rDo ring
(L-85; M-V)	lDan chu Mon rdo
(L-86; M-V)	'O ma rDo ring
(L-87; M-V)	Zhing chen Mon rdo
(L-88; M-V)	Shangs rDo ring
(L-89; M-V)	Khang dmar rDo ring
(L-90; M-V)	'A 'go rDo ring
(L-91; M-V)	Yid rtse mKhar rDo ring

(L-92; M-III)	sPyog po rDo ring
(L-93; M-III)	Shag gang mTho po rDo ring
(L-94; M-III)	Pe gya rDo ring
(L-95; M-IV)	Senge rDo ring
(L-96; M-IV)	Chu phug rDo ring
(L-97; M-III)	Lo ro rDo ring
(L-135; M-III)	Mer btum Pis ma
(L-136; M-III)	Mer btum Phyug mo
(L-220; M-VIII)	Ma g.yo rDo ring
(L-221; M-VIII)	dPal mo rDo phur
(L-222; M-II)	Tshar skam Byang ma rDo ring
(L-223; M-II)	Dung rtse rDo ring
(L-224; M-II)	A chen Do ring
(L-225; M-II)	rNya shing rDo ring
(L-226; M-II)	Ra ser khog rDo ring
(L-227; M-VII)	rDo ring dMar mo
(L-228; M-VII)	rDo ring lCags ra
(L-229; M-V)	Sag the rDo ring
(L-230; M-V)	Na ma lung rDo ring
(L-231; M-V)	rDo ring dKar mo
(L-232; M-V)	Me 'bar rDo ring
(L-233; M-V)	sMon lam rDo ring
(L-234; M-V)	Zhing lung rDo ring
(L-235; M-VI)	Khams chen rDo ring

Type-IX: Monolithic arrays with accompanying edifices

(L-98; M-II)	rTa rgo rTa 'dogs sa
(L-99; M-VII)	Ser leb Mon rdo
(L-100; M-V)	Klu bdud Mon rdo
(L-101; M-VI)	'Brong pa dpon Gyang shig
(L-102; M-VI)	mNa' ma 'Dre 'khyer
(L-103; M-IV)	Byang sdong Gong kha
(L-104; M-III)	Yu kham bu
(L-105; M-V)	Khang dmar Mon dur
(L-106; M-IV)	mTho po Mar rang
(L-132; M-II)	gSum 'bug rDo ring
(L-236; M-VIII)	Gyang tshwa mdo Gyang ro
(L-237; M-VII)	Chu phur rDo phur
(L-238; M-V)	Mon dur Lhas
(L-239; M-V)	Sa mig Mon dur
(L-240; M-V)	gNam gyi Ka ba

Type-X: Monuments of other typologies

(L-107; M-I)	'Brug mo'i sBra yas
(L-108; M-I)	rKyang rag Kha gog
(L-109; M-II)	Ba'am
(L-110; M-II)	Dar chung
(L-111; M-II)	Lu sngon
(L-112; M-II)	Dom ri gNa' kha Mon ra
(L-113; M-IV)	Klu mo Pho brang Mon rdo
(L-114; M-VI)	Mi lhas 'Khor rdo
(L-129; M-I)	Yar lang
(L-130; M-I)	'Bri lam
(L-131; M-I)	mChod rten brgya ba
(L-152; M-III)	sKyung mo ri
(L-241; M-VI)	sPang dmar gZhung Khang gog

Type-XI: Pictographs and petroglyphs

(L-68; M-VI)	Ra 'brog 'Phrang
(L-116; M-I)	bKra shis Do
(L-122; M-I)	Khyi rgan Gag pa Do
(L-123; M-I)	Ra mo Do
(L-126; M-I)	sTong shong Phug
(L-127; M-I)	Rig lnga Do
(L-128; M-I)	lCe Do
(L-146; M-III)	Lha khang dMar chag
(L-250; M-V)	Ri rgyal
(L-242; M-VII)	Brag khung mDzes po
(L-243; M-VI)	sKabs ren sPungs ri
(L-244; M-VI)	Gong ra
(L-208; M-VI)	sGog ra
(L-245; M-VI)	Brag gdong
(L-246; M-VI)	Kham pa Rwa co
(L-247; M-VI)	Brag lung Nub ma
(L-181; M-VI)	Chu mKhar Gyam sGrub phug
(L-248; M-VI)	Gri'u Chu thang
(L-249; M-VI)	Chu lung

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